

1992

## The impact of dramatic improvisational strategies on the oral comprehension skills of children with a low socio-economic background

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**THE IMPACT OF DRAMATIC IMPROVISATIONAL STRATEGIES ON  
THE ORAL COMPREHENSION SKILLS OF CHILDREN WITH A LOW  
SOCIO-ECONOMIC BACKGROUND.**

BY

Heather A. Timms ( Dip. Teach. )

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Award  
of;

**Bachelor of Education with Honours.**

at the Faculty of Education,  
Edith Cowan University.

Date of Submission : Tuesday, 1st December, 1992.

## USE OF THESIS

The Use of Thesis statement is not included in this version of the thesis.

## ABSTRACT

Children with a low socio-economic background frequently fail to reach a high level of scholastic performance during their school years. The school milieu is a potential contributor to this scenario, as schools are generally designed for the attributes, needs, and skill levels that are characteristic of children from middle socio-economic backgrounds. As a result, these children require specific intervention to enable them to function within this 'alien' system.

Drama offers unique and exciting possibilities in this field. Previous research endorses the use of improvisational strategies for this specific purpose; and the theories propounded by learning and language theorists and drama educationalists provide a strong theoretical framework.

This study involved a sample of 56, 9 to 10 year old students with low socio-economic backgrounds. An 8 week improvisational drama programme (16 one-hour sessions) was administered to half the students, while the others served as a control. The design of this study was quasi experimental and followed a pre-test/training/post-test format. The study aimed to assess the effectiveness of this programme by both quantitative and qualitative methods.

The purpose of this study, therefore, was to assess whether improvisational dramatic strategies would affect three skill areas of *oral comprehension* (translation, interpretation, and extrapolation) and also, children's *attitudes* both toward themselves and others.

Analysis of the data showed significant improvements in the treatment group's skills of translation, interpretation and extrapolation. In addition, significant improvements were found in the treatment group's attitude towards others. The treatment group's classroom teacher also rated students' attitudes and school performance more highly at the conclusion of the programme.

The findings of this study suggest that the integration of specific drama strategies into the educative process offers the following benefits:

- enhancement of children's internal motivation,
- active participation in learning, which has a positive effect on the development of cognition,
- a specific targetting for the development of higher order cognitive skills, and,
- the emphasis on interaction and creativity fosters positive self-concepts.

It can, therefore, be concluded that a programme of improvisational dramatics has the potential to improve the oral comprehension skills and attitudes of children with low socio-economic backgrounds. Drama is one avenue that allows teachers to tap into potential that cannot be brought to fruition by the conventional methods of mainstream education.

## DECLARATION

I certify that this thesis does not incorporate, without acknowledgement, any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any institution of higher education and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it does not contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text.

Signature.....

Date.....1<sup>st</sup> DECEMBER. 1992.....

### **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.**

As author, I wish to acknowledge the support and guidance provided by George White, Research Supervisor for this study. His experience, creativity and never-ending encouragement over the years has been a source of great inspiration.

I also wish to acknowledge the expertise and advice of Dr. Amanda Blackmore. Her helpfulness in the analysis and organization of the data has greatly enhanced my understanding of the results and therefore the final interpretations.

Thanks must also go to the staff and students of the sampled primary schools. Without their time and energy this study could not have taken place.

Finally, I would like to express my gratitude to Rosemary Kendell for her assistance and perceptive input, to John Oliver for his generosity and computing expertise, and to Liam Barr for putting up with me.



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## **CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION.**

### **1.1 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY.**

Scholastic achievement has become highly prized and is necessary if one is to function fully within today's society. Educationalists have designed sets of criteria that are used to develop and measure scholastic achievement.

These standard criteria are largely based on middle socio- economic norms but, as Adler (1973) observes, programmes and evaluation strategies (used on low socio-economic populations) that are based on such 'normative' criteria may be unsuccessful and in some cases harmful. In addition to this, according to Torrance (1976), economically and socially disadvantaged students often show talents and needs that are different from those of the majority group. "These students often do not 'make it' in the traditional system and as a result develop poor achievement, low self esteem and an underappreciation of their capabilities" (Gourgey, Bosseau & Delgado, 1985, p.9) . It is well accepted that one of the major causes of educational failure for these children is the conflict they experience between their social class and that of the school, and the dominant culture it represent (Adler, 1973; Deutsch, 1967; Romaine,1984).

Commenting on research into the learning processes of disadvantaged children, Deutsch (1967) points out that the lower

class home is not a verbally orientated environment and therefore, these children often have a limited experience with language and lack essential language functions associated with the school system. The verbal and linguistic experience of children greatly influences their learning, as language is central to the whole educational process. The essential role of language in learning is highlighted by Halliday when he states that, "most of what we learn, we learn through language" (1978, p.96). In order to address these needs it maybe that these students require specialized strategies to enable them to adjust to, and perform within the school system.

Research in drama education has highlighted the positive effects dramatic strategies can have on children's creativity, oral language development, comprehension, attitudes and self esteem. Amongst these studies several were conducted on subjects from low socio-economic backgrounds (Dansky, 1979; Christie, 1983; Gourgey et al, 1985), which suggests that the benefits of drama in education may be generalized to this population. The use of drama with these children has exciting possibilities.

In drama, children speak because they find a need to do so, and the mask of a role gives them another voice with which to be heard. The dramatic context suspends reality and gives children a new courage to explore and experiment (Bolton, 1986; Wagner, 1976). In addition, these new contexts and roles can demand different language skills which create new possibilities for language use and development (Bryon, 1988). Learning is generated from the needs and interests of the student and they are encouraged to become active participants in



the dramatic learning process. The use of dramatic learning strategies is possibly one of the most powerful tools to encourage language development and enable learning to be active, relevant and non-threatening to children from low socio-economic backgrounds.

## **1.2 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY.**

The purpose of this study was to explore the potential effects of dramatic improvisational strategies on the development of oral comprehension skills and attitudes of children from low socio-economic backgrounds. This study aimed to observe and measure the effects that a programme of dramatic improvisational strategies might have on the sample population's oral comprehension skills (translation, interpretation, extrapolation), and attitudes towards self and others.

## **1.3 STATEMENT OF RESEARCH QUESTIONS.**

In order to explore the potential effects of dramatic improvisational strategies on the development of oral comprehension skills and attitudes of children with a low socio-economic background the following questions were researched:

1. Will there be a change in the oral comprehension skills of children exposed to dramatic improvisational strategies?

1.1 Will there be an observable and measurable change in the skill of translation in the sample population ?

1.2 Will there be an observable and measurable change in the skill of interpretation in the sample population ?

1.3 Will there be an observable and measurable change in the skill of extrapolation in the sample population ?

2. Does the use of dramatic improvisational strategies change, to an assessable degree, children's attitudes towards themselves and others ?

3. Does the use of dramatic improvisational strategies change teachers' ratings of the students' attitudes and academic performance?

#### **1.4 OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS**

**Dramatic Improvisational Strategies :** This term embraces the philosophies of creative dramatics and educational drama. It is suitably defined by Davis & Behn as:

An improvisational, non-exhibitional, process-centred form of drama in which participants are guided by a leader to imagine, enact and reflect upon human experience...Its primary purpose is to facilitate learning of the participants rather than train actors for the stage (1978, p.10).

**Oral Comprehension Skills :** refers to the oral language that illustrates the Comprehension skills as determined by Bloom (1956) in his Taxonomy of Educational Objectives: Cognitive Domain :-

**2.00 Comprehension.**

2.10 Translation.

2.20 Interpretation.

2.30 Extrapolation.

(Implicit in oral language is the skill of production, however, the emphasis is on the oral illustration of the 2.00 Comprehension skills and not on the quality or quantity of production.)

**Translation :** refers to the subject's ability to reproduce information from a non-verbal form into a verbal form. (Comprehension skill 2.10 as defined in Bloom's (1956) Taxonomy).

Example: "This is a large, brown, smooth statue, of two hands clasping together."

**Interpretation :** refers to the subject's ability to explain the meaning of various forms of information (Comprehension Skill 2.20 as defined in Bloom's (1956) Taxonomy).

Example: "This statue symbolizes peace and friendship."

**Extrapolation :** refers to the subject's ability to make predictions or inferences from a specific experience (Comprehension Skill 2.30 as defined in Bloom's (1956) Taxonomy).

Example: "This statue would probably have been made to pay tribute to a person that had devoted their life to helping others and bringing peace to lands troubled by war and sadness."

**Attitude :** refers to the subject's ranking of themselves on the Gougeon, Bosseau & Delgado Attitude Scale (1985).

**Socio Economic Status :** Is commonly defined by, "the children's home environment and by the occupation and income level of the parent/s" (Adler, 1973; Burnes, 1970).

**Children from a Low Socio Economic Background:** refers to the subjects whose parent/s are employed in unskilled labour or who receive Social Security Benefits.

## **1.5 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY.**

If creative dramatics is to become a recognized element in the curriculum, its value as an educational tool must be validated through research. "Research is necessary to convince superintendents, principals, or harried teachers that creative drama is anything more than a well intentioned frill which is eminently dispensable" (Vitz, 1983, p.17). Unfortunately to date, there is little research data available to substantiate the claims made by proponents of educational drama. This study is therefore significant for the following reasons;

1. The results provide support for the educational value of using improvisational dramatic programmes with children from low socio-economic backgrounds.
2. The results support the findings of related studies carried out by Dansky (1979), Furman (1981), Gourgey, Bosseau and Delgado (1985) and Saltz, Dixon and Johnson (1977).
3. The majority of studies that have focussed on oral language have concentrated on production and language growth. This current study however focuses on the *oral illustration* of three specific *comprehension skills* ( translation, interpretation, extrapolation ). As Fien states;

Since theorists such as Piaget and Vygotsky stress the meaning or the control functions of language, rather than its productive quality or quantity, studies of language meaning (eg: comprehension) might have more theoretical significance than studies of language production" (1981, p.1102).

## **CHAPTER TWO : REVIEW OF LITERATURE.**

It is an ongoing matter of contention amongst theorists and educationalists as to which are the most effective methods of teaching. Bruner challenges educators to "partake of the spirit of a forum, to encourage negotiation, and to strive for a re-creation of meaning" (1986, p.73). The use of dramatic strategies is one response to Bruner's challenge, and the effectiveness of these strategies on the learning potential of children is well supported by both research and theory.

### **2.1 THE ORIGINS**

Towards the end of the last century, there arose a new movement in education which advocated child-centred learning. It contested the 'Empty Pitcher' model where the student was perceived as an empty vessel to be filled with knowledge. The battle between this and Froebel's 'Flowering Seed' model (described by Dewey, 1915, p.118) provided the catalyst for the introduction of drama into the field of education. At the turn of the century, the dramatisation of subject matter was introduced by Harriet Finlay-Johnson and later called the 'Play-way' by Caldwell Cook (Bolton, 1986, p.12). The primary focus was on the acquisition of knowledge. In the period to follow the focus switched from content to skill and the art of acting crept in. During the 1940's, the original concept of drama education having links with child play had been lost. Slade (1954) was the first to seriously attempt bringing natural play into education. By the 1950's, there were two mutually exclusive

educational ideals - Drama and Theatre. Brian Way carried on the Slade philosophy but added new perspectives - he called for exercises in sensory experience and concentration, self-expression and the development of the 'individuality of the individual' (Way, 1967, p.3). Drama was not another subject but a way of educating in the fullest sense.

By the 1970's the writings and practices of Dorothy Heathcote had become influential. She set about redefining the relationship between drama and education. Subject matter was brought back into focus, but taken beyond the level of facts expounded by Finlay-Johnson to "a way of looking at issues, principles, implications, consequences and responsibilities behind the facts" (Heathcote, 1980, p.13). Common to all pioneers throughout this century has been the belief that when students are involved in drama of some kind, learning occurs.

## **2.2 DEFINITIONS**

The term "Improvisational dramatic strategies" embraces the philosophies of 'Creative Dramatics' (Davis and Behn, 1978; Lehr, 1983; Rubin, 1978) and 'Educational Drama' (Bolton, 1986; Booth, 1985; Heathcote, 1976, 1980, 1983; Morgan and Saxton, 1985; Verriour, 1985). It is difficult to find specific and widely accepted definitions for these terms as they are often used interchangeably or with different emphases. However, in 1977, the Children's Educational Theatre Association appointed a committee to undertake the re-examination of terminology in the allied fields of drama and theatre. They identified drama and theatre as existing on a continuum (See

Figure 2.1). This spectrum of activities was established using the classical definitions of drama (a thing done) and theatre (to gaze on) (Davis and Behn, 1978 ). The point on the continuum specified as 'Guided Drama' is the general area in which this study is most interested.

**FIGURE 2.1 : THE DRAMA/THEATRE CONTINUUM.**

Drama in its natural state.	Guided Drama	Participation Theatre/Drama	Theatre
	Creative Drama or Child Drama.	Audience members alternately watchers and participants	Strictly pre- arranged art form: Clear distinction between actors and audience.

(Davis & Behn, 1978, p.10)

In defining the area of 'Guided Drama' the committee stated that:

It is an improvisational, non-exhibitional, process-centred form of drama in which participants are guided by a leader to imagine, enact and reflect upon human experience....Its primary purpose is to facilitate learning of the participants rather than train actors for the stage (Davis & Behn, 1978, p.11).

This understanding of drama is reflected in the theories and practices of both educational drama and creative drama exponents. In the publication, 'Creative Dramatics in the Elementary School' the Texas



Education Agency ( 1978 ) details their concept of educational drama which can be summarised as follows.

1. A means towards more comprehensive understanding of concepts from various subject areas.
2. A device for strengthening the integration of thought, action and language for children.
3. A method by which the teacher can gain an insight into the interests of students.
4. An exercise that allows children to develop their natural inclinations to dramatize, as well as their skills in communicating ideas in a variety of ways.
5. A communal activity that enables children and teachers from diverse backgrounds to meet and share experiences.

Beneath the various terms that are most commonly used, the central elements of this form of drama are similar. They are all based on the following.

1. A desire to educate.
2. A student-centred and process-orientated approach.
3. The importance of language in learning.
4. The provision of an active forum for learning.
5. Learning that integrates of the affective and cognitive into one experience.

Heathcote (1988) neatly summarises this when she describes her conception of the use of drama as a conscious employment of the elements of drama to educate - to literally bring out what children already know but don't yet know they know. She regards drama as a means to plummet deep into feeling and meaning and search for

the precise dramatic pressure to force students to come at a problem in a new way and fight for language adequate to the tension they feel.

## **2.3 GENERAL LITERATURE**

The philosophical bases for this study are twofold. On the one hand, there are the philosophies of educationalists and learning and language theorists - concerning the development and role of language, the learning experience and the role of play in children's learning and mental development; on the other hand, there are the drama educationalists and the theories on which they have based their practices . The two schools together form the fundamental framework for this study. In reviewing the general literature I will address each element separately and conclude by examining the interrelationship that exist between the theories.

### **2.3.1 LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT AND ITS ROLE IN LEARNING.**

It is well accepted by language theorists that language is central to learning (Donaldson, 1978; Halliday, 1978; Romaine, 1984). This is illustrated by Halliday when he states:

Most of what we learn, we learn through language. This is true of our most commonsense knowledge, all that we learn before, and outside of our schooling; but it is especially true of educational knowledge (1978, p. 96).

Language can be seen as central to the educational process.

Therefore, when considering theories to explain educational failure, it has been seen as 'logical' to hypothesize that educational failure can be explained by linguistic failure (Romaine, 1984). This notion however, is inextricably linked to particular theories of language development and communicative competence. To determine possible sources of educational failure it is essential to understand the different theories of language development.

A great many studies of child language acquisition have tended to see the development of language in terms of innate biological functions (Romaine, 1984). One of the primary exponents of this theory is the American linguist, Noam Chomsky. As Donaldson explains:

Chomsky's central thesis was - and is - that we are innately equipped with knowledge about what human language is like. He supposes us to be provided from birth with a special sensitivity to those features of the grammars of human language which are 'universal' (1978, p. 32).

From this point of view, language is seen as a form of knowledge to be acquired and the questions that are posed centre around identifying the structures of the brain that enable an individual to speak and understand language (Halliday, 1978). Chomsky proposed that a child is born with a 'language acquisition device' (LAD) that provides the child with a highly specific predisposition to understand the complex system of language (Chomsky, 1980). With this theory, an answer was found to the problem of how a child could master a rich and highly structured system on the basis of deficient and degenerate data (Romaine, 1984).

In more recent years the former theories of language development have been seen to need refining and expanding (Donaldson, 1987; Halliday, 1978; Romaine, 1984). To build onto Chomsky's ideas of grammatical competence (which is an innate biological function), are the theories of communicative competence.

Communicative competence is acquired through a socialization into a particular language-using community. The uses of language which a child acquires will be determined by the functions which a language serves in a culture (Romaine, 1984, p.2).

From this view point a child acquires language by using it. The child is, therefore, more dependent on his or her environment and the language within this environment - its texts and contexts - for successful language learning (Halliday, 1987). The concept of communicative competence embraces both the knowledge of language and the appropriate use of it , both of which are culture dependent because they are learned through social interaction.

Educational failure is usually associated with urban lower class groups (Halliday, 1978; Romaine, 1984). If, as previously stated, language is central to learning and is developed through a process of socialization (in a particular language using community) then the failure of these children in mainstream education may not be so much a linguistic problem, but rather a conflict between the school's language and culture and their home's language and culture (Bernstein, 1973).

Halliday summarises this point of view when he states:

Every normal child has a fully functional linguistic system; the difficulty is that of reconciling one functional orientation with another. The remedy will not lie in the administration of concentrated doses

of linguistic structure. It may lie, in part, in the broadening of the functional perspective - that of the school, as much as that of the individual pupil" (Halliday, 1987, p.107).

From this viewpoint, children who speak a non-standard dialect (children from lower class groups) are not disadvantaged linguistically, but rather socially. Their use and understanding of language (which is appropriate to their social environment) is in conflict with that of the schools. They lack the functions of language that are characteristic of the school system and the dominant culture it represents. It is this discontinuity and conflict that is at the heart of the problem (Bernstein, 1973).

### **2.3.2 THE ROLE OF THE LEARNING EXPERIENCE IN A CHILD'S MENTAL DEVELOPMENT.**

When considering children's learning and mental development, different theorists place different emphases on the importance of the learning experience. Piaget (1967) and Vygotsky (1976) have fundamentally different views of humankind and provide two different vantage points from which to view a child's mental development.

Piaget claims that, "it is development that directs learning rather than vice-versa"(1967, p.140).He views the mental potential of an individual as a biological entity which, given certain conditions, will go through certain stages of development. For Piaget, the maturation process is the crucial factor in development, with experience as a necessary but secondary element (Bruner, 1987).

From a different perspective Vygotsky (1976), claims that properly organised learning results in mental development . Vygotsky views the child essentially, as a social being:

Every function in the child's cultural development appears twice; first, on the social level and later, on the individual level; first between people, and then inside the child... All the higher functions originate as actual relating between human individuals (1933, p.57).

Through this process of social interaction the seeds of growth are planted within the child. The role of adults and peers in this process is essential (Bruner, 1986). Their significance is illustrated in Vygotsky's (1976) concept of the 'zone of proximal development'. This theory argues that the sort of thinking children can do in a group with the aid of a teacher or capable peers today, they will be able to do on their own tomorrow. If this is the case, then, the only good learning that takes place is that which is in advance of development (Bruner, 1986; Vygotsky, 1976). From this vantage point, the role of the teacher and of the learning experience in a child's mental development, is a very significant one.

### **2.3.3 THE IMPORTANCE OF PLAY IN LEARNING**

A number of theorists (Dewey, 1915; Erikson, 1950; Piaget, 1967; Vygotsky, 1976) claim that engaging in make-believe play is important for normal cognitive development. The assumed relationship between play and cognition has received correlational support from studies showing that deficits in make-believe play are associated with cognitive deficiencies and poor scholastic achievement (Pellegrini, 1980; Rubin, Maioni & Horning, 1976; Similansky, 1990; Wolfgang, 1974). Experimental

evidence of a causal relationship between play and specific cognitive skills has subsequently come from studies in which non players were trained in make-believe play (Dansky, 1979; Lovinger, 1974; Rosen, 1974; Saltz, Dixon & Johnson, 1977).

The work of Piaget (1967) provided the catalyst for what Fien (1981) terms the 'third wave' of interest in pretend-play. The underlying values of play however, had begun to be recognised around the turn of the century. The swing from passive to active learning called for a new appraisal of what could create the educational ideal. Active learning, as labelled by Erikson (1950) was seen as motivational and self-reinforcing: "Learning is active, it involves reaching out of the mind, and an assimilation that starts from within" (Dewey, 1915, p.9). The ideals of active learning are reflected in the educational benefits of play.

Children increase their communication and language skills as they gather and use objects for group activities. Their intellectual skills are refined as they associate with one another. Decision making occurs as skills of identifying problems, classifying, predicting and verifying are practiced (Yawkey, 1979, p.247).

When most children enter school they are presented with a whole new way of learning: "Academics replace play. Where once there was active play, now there is passive work" (Landy, 1981, p.39). This however, does not have to be the case. As research and theory suggest, the principles of play have sound educational value: "If the teacher is wise enough to value the principles of play they will apply them to classroom learning" (Landy, 1981, p. 40).

### **2.3.4 DRAMA IN EDUCATION**

Dramatic improvisational strategies have a potency for learning that can be summarised into six major areas - the use of context, the emphasis on process, the dialectic and holistic approaches, the use of teacher-in-role, and the importance of reflection.

Students are allowed to bring to drama what they know (Bolton, 1986; Booth, 1985; Heathcote, 1983; Verriour, 1985). The dramatic experience uses contexts (the dramatic situations) that are meaningful to the learner in order to bridge the gap between the known and the unknown. Verriour states that, "children's difficulties with abstract learning tasks in unfamiliar contexts may find, in drama, the strategies to facilitate linguistic and cognitive growth" (1985, p.185). The needs and interests specific to different groups can be identified and recognised within the dramatic context. In this way learning can move closer to being meaningful and relevant to the student.

Furthermore, as shown by theory (Byron, 1988; Craig & Edwards, 1988; Heathcote, 1980) and research (Carroll, 1984, 1988) these strategies also form a powerful tool for developing language. When we step into a drama we agree to suspend the 'real' context (the classroom) and become immersed in a new fictional context. As Byron explains:

New contexts, new roles and new relationships begin to operate, because we agree to operate in an 'as if' or fictional world. And those new contexts, roles and relationships can make very different language demands on us than those of the 'real'



classroom, so new possibilities for language use and development are opened up (1988, p.18).

Here in these fictional worlds children are faced with different problems and decisions. The pressure of the dramatic moment provides encouragement and a meaningful purpose to confront the task and fight for the language adequate to the tension they feel (Wagner, 1976).

'Metaxis' is a Greek term which has been interpreted by Augusto Boal (1979, cited Bolton, 1985, p.76) as a way of identifying two worlds; the real and the fictitious. In drama, the context is fictitious but the responses are real. It is this dialectical experience that creates a potency for learning (Bolton, 1986; Wagner, 1976). Slade states:

Children have the chance to face failure without failure's consequences, within the safety of make-believe. It is this ambivalence of being hurt and yet not hurt; angered and yet not angered - that is central to the child drama experience (1954, p.57).

In an environment that is non-threatening, children can find a new courage to experiment and explore knowledge. This can result in deeper understandings as they are discovered through active participation and not passive absorption (Edwards & Furlong, 1978).

The emphasis in drama is on the process, rather than the product (Bolton, 1979, 1986; Heathcote, 1988; Wagner, 1976). The dramatic process aims at tapping the stored knowledge within children and showing them ways to use it, in order to cope with the complexities of

modern society. Bolton explains that learning in drama is essentially a process of reframing:

What knowledge a pupil already has is placed in a new perspective. The kind of knowledge drama opens up is not the received knowledge of the school disciplines, but rather a common or natural understanding. Most educational institutions fail their pupils in developing natural understanding. The need for this is urgent (1985, p.156).

This issue is reflected in Heathcote's belief that skills and attitudes are the essential luggage for the life-long learner and not a storage of facts that can perhaps be superseded within a single decade ( Heathcote,1988).

Drama challenges educationalists with the issue of holistic learning. Heathcote states, "linear right-handed knowing takes the world apart and outlines it. Left-handed knowing takes it all in and makes of it a synthesis, a vision of the whole"(1976, p.166). If we consider Bloom's (1956) taxonomy of educational objectives, we can identify the potential for growth in all domains; cognitive, affective and psychomotor, through the learning experiences of educational dramatics (Booth, 1985; Nelson, 1983; Rubin, 1983). Booth aptly summarises this idea in saying: "Drama in education is a whole representation of thought, providing whole meanings for each student" ( 1985, p.195).

One of educational drama's most effective techniques (and also most controversial) is the use of teacher-in-role ( Rubin, 1978; Wagner, 1976). The teacher is placed inside the drama, not as a meaning-giver but as a

meaning-maker (Ross, 1988). The use of teacher-in-role was brought to the fore by Dorothy Heathcote. In role, Heathcote - like other drama educationalists - works alongside children in order to deepen their commitment to the drama and to heighten their awareness. This use of role allows the teacher to provide necessary information, and exert adequate pressure in order to build children's belief in the drama and work them towards identifying with it.

Once a class identifies with the people in the drama, the drive is released and the situation becomes what Heathcote terms 'educationally explosive' (Wagner, 1976, p.70).

While this time in-role is short compared to the complete drama lesson, it nevertheless allows the teacher to press for deeper commitment and arouse children's emotions. It also provides the teacher with opportunities to model language functions and registers that are seldom found in traditional teaching settings.

The process of reflection is central to any drama experience. Without reflection, nothing of any significance can happen (Bolton, 1986; Heathcote, 1986; McCaslin, 1975). In our lives, time for reflection is rarely found. In drama, time is made. It is in these times of reflection that learning can take place;

(Reflection)... seeks to probe the symbolic meaning of the dramatic encounter through marrying the subjective experience and objective analysis.. it strives to elevate the ordinary into awe and seek the 'universal' human meanings which transcend individual understanding and extend knowledge of humanity at large (Goode, 1983, p.9).

In reflection, children can view themselves in relationship to their roles. In this way they can identify their behaviour and attitudes and generalise their insights to issues in their own lives (Booth, 1985). Whether it is during the drama, or at the end, time for reflection can bring teacher and children together and enable them to evaluate the experience and consolidate their learning.

### **2.35 INTEGRATING THE FRAMEWORK.**

If we view the philosophies of learning and language theorists and those of drama educationalists together, strong correlations between the theories appear. It is this integrated framework that provides strong support for the use of drama as an educational tool.

It is well accepted that language is central to the educational process (Halliday, 1978; Romaine, 1984). Often educational failure is attributed to a language deficit. If however, we take a sociolinguistic perspective then the cause of lower class children failing in education is not due to a linguistic disadvantage, but rather, a social disadvantage. These children lack certain language functions that are characteristic of the school system. Halliday (1978) suggests the remedy may lie, to some extent, in a compromise; broadening the schools 'functional perspective' to meet the child, and broadening the child's 'functional perspective' to meet the school. Within drama there may be an answer. The use of dramatic contexts provides learning experiences that are not based on standard norms but are relevant to different children's needs and situations - drama broadening the school's functional perspective. In turn, these same contexts can make

different language demands on children, facilitating language use and a growth of language functions - drama broadening the child's functional perspective.

Theorists have different ideas concerning the role of the learning experience in a child's mental development. Vygotsky (1977) suggests that the development of mental potential can be greatly influenced by learning experiences that encourage social interaction with adults and peers. The only good learning he believes, is that which is in advance of development (Bruner, 1986). Davis (1986) suggests that the principles of educational drama, in fact, work in line with Vygotsky's theories of learning and development. This is most apparent in the social interactive nature of drama and the technique of teacher-in-role. "Drama provides both teacher and student with possibilities for actively negotiating meanings in situations that require abstract, reflective thought and language" (Verriour, 1985, p.186).

The relationship between play and cognition is soundly supported by both theorists and research. Drama provides an avenue for play to be brought into the classroom, therefore allowing children to be active and self-directed participators in the learning process.

## **2.4 LOW SOCIO ECONOMIC POPULATIONS.**

### **2.4.1 DEFINITIONS**

A child's socio-economic status (SES) is normally defined by the child's home environment and the occupation, education and income level of the parents (Adler, 1973; Burnes, 1970; Telegdy, 1974). Adler used two formal criteria to determine the social position of children - the education level and occupation of their parents. From these criteria he formulated the following socio-economic groups (1973, p.651):

Middle SES - high school education or over and professional, managerial or trade occupations.

Low SES - 10 years of school or less, unskilled labourer or welfare aid  
(This definition of low socio-economic status will be used for the purpose of this study).

### **2.4.2 LANGUAGE AND LEARNING**

Many studies that have compared children from different social classes have yielded results stating that the IQ performance and articulatory proficiency of middle class children is superior to that of lower class children (Bernstein, 1973; Burnes, 1970; Telegdy, 1973, 1974). The lower scores obtained by lower class children have frequently been attributed to a language deficit (Bernstein, 1973; Romaine, 1984).

There are several inappropriate assumptions made from these research studies. Firstly, standardised instruments were commonly used to measure the variables. Generalisations based on such culturally biased "normative" data are often misleading (Adler, 1973).

Secondly, these results, in fact, reveal ethnic and social class differences in language and not a differentiation in levels of speech capabilities ( Adler, 1973). In essence, research studies (comparing social classes) that stress the concept of a language deficit in low social classes, may be doing so from a culturally-biased, "normative" perspective.

Children from low socio-economic groups experience little or no difficulty with language when relating within their social class (Deutsch, 1967). The problems arise when the children must use their language within an educational system that is based on a different cultural and social class (Halliday, 1978; Bernstein, 1973). The problem is compounded because language is central to the whole education process, and the child from a low social class possesses a different range of language functions to that of the school norm. As a result, they often experience learning problems in many different areas. In order to address the needs of children from low socio economic backgrounds, the functions of these children's language need to be developed - which is very different to linguistic remediation. In addition, programmes need to be designed that take into account the social base upon which the children are reared (Adler, 1973). It is this issue of language and learning in low socio-economic populations that this study aims to address.

## **2.5 PREVIOUS RESEARCH FINDINGS**

There are many techniques which facilitate human development that are still in relative darkness. Drama, as it relates to social, emotional and

cognitive growth is one such technique (Vitz, 1983). However, studies that have been done in the area of drama in education, show the positive effects of drama on *comprehension and attitude* (Gourgey, Bosseau & Delgado, 1985; Rosen & Koziol, 1989) *story comprehension* (Galda, 1982; Pellegrini & Galda, 1982) *cognitive performance* (Carroll, 1988; Christie, 1983; Dansky, 1979; Furman, 1981; Parsons, Schaffner, Little & Felton, 1984; Rosen, 1974; Saltz, Dixon & Johnson, 1977) and *language development* (Carroll, 1988; Lovinger, 1974; Parsons et al, 1984; Stewig & Vail, 1985; Stewig & Young, 1978). The findings of these studies and reviews of research in this area show that the benefits of drama are not restricted to attitudinal and emotional gain. Dramatic activities can contribute positively to improvement in academic performance (Kardash & Wright, 1987; Vitz, 1983; Wagner, 1988).

Previous research that was concerned with comprehension used either *standardised* reading comprehension tests to measure the dependent variable, or, *dramatic play training* as the independent variable. In addition, a large proportion of the studies that focussed on oral language were concerned with its productive *quality* and *quantity*. This study is different in that it aimed to assess the effect of predominantly '*in-role*' drama techniques on children's ability to make and orally communicate *meaning* using *non-standardised* data collection instruments.

The ethnographic research carried out by Parsons et al (1984) and then later extended by Carroll (1988), provides two of the most significant documents on the relationship between drama and children's oral language. These two studies conclusively link language and cognitive



development with the facilitating role of drama (Tupman, 1987). The studies examined transcribed discourse surveyed from Australian primary school children of all ages, in orthodox classroom contexts and in 'in-role' drama contexts (Carroll, 1988). The oral language was collected by audio and video recorders in order to facilitate its transcription and later analysis. The most significant findings of these two studies (Carroll, 1988; Parsons et al, 1984) are as follows :

1. Drama stimulates children's language and thinking.
2. Children use significantly more expressive language in drama than they use in other classroom contexts. Expressive language employs more complex syntactic structures associated with propositional modes of discourse.
3. Through expressive language, children move into more abstract modes of thinking.
4. "The view that drama is about emotional involvement only is not sustained by the results of the drama sample" (Carroll, 1988, p.20).

Drama provides children with greater opportunities to develop the cognitive processes of hypothesizing, speculating, predicting, theorising, imagining and evaluating .

The major impact of these two studies, is summed up in the following comment by John Carroll:

Schools are involved predominantly with the giving and receiving of knowledge.... Within in the drama frame, the pupils are able, with the aid of their teachers, to become more autonomous self-motivated learners in a way that combines concerns for the world of Matter, Mind and Society in a balanced whole that is lacking in the current overly positivistic school curriculum (1988, p.21)

A number of studies were conducted on subjects with low socio-economic backgrounds (Christie, 1983; Dansky, 1979; Gourgey et al 1985, Rosen, 1974; Saltz, Dixon & Johnson, 1977). The results of these studies demonstrate that the benefits of drama in education can be generalised to this population. For instance, in a study conducted by Gourgey et al (1985), an improvisational dramatic programme was developed for 150 economically disadvantaged primary school children in grades 4, 5 and 6 at two primary schools in New Jersey. A group of 108 children who were of similar age and from neighbouring schools, served as the control group. Significant improvements were found in the treatment group's reading achievement and attitudes towards self and others. In discussing their results Gourgey et al suggested that, "the improvisational dramatics programme provided an effective approach to improving skills by tapping resources left untouched by traditional methods" (1985, p.14).

It is interesting to note however, that some research findings regarding the effect of educational drama on student's social, emotional or academic development may be a result of differences in adult contact during the programme (Christie, 1983).

Christie carried out a study to determine whether a drama treatment or the adult contact was primarily responsible for the gains made in verbal intelligence and creativity. A sample of 17 pre-schoolers were divided into a skill tutoring group and a drama tutoring group. The programme consisted of 9 X 20 minute sessions of either skill or drama tutoring, with each group being exposed to similar adult contact. The two groups made significant gains in mental age and fluency

although, there was no significant differences between the group's scores on any of the dependent variables. Because both groups had received a similar amount and quality of adult tuition, these findings led Christie (1983) to suggest that the gains made through drama tutoring were caused primarily by adult contact rather than by drama. This conclusion, however, should be viewed with several limitations in mind. First, the study involved only a small number of children selected from one primary school. When groups are so small, it is less likely that a significant difference between groups can be obtained. In addition, generalizability of the results will also be quite limited. Second, because the training programme was only 9 X 20 minutes sessions in duration, the programme may have not have continued long enough to show a significant difference between groups. Never-the-less, this study does highlight the need for researchers in this area to be aware that the drama teacher could influence the post-test scores of subjects in the treatment group. This matter will be taken into account when interpreting the results of this study.

## **2.6 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY.**

### **2.6.1 PREVIOUS RESEARCH METHODOLOGY.**

Research studies in the area of drama and education describe a range of methodologies from the *case study approaches* (Stewig & Young, 1978) to the *quasi-experimental* (Gourgey et al, 1985; Stewig & Vail, 1985; Rosen & Koziol, 1989) and *truly experimental designs* (Dansky, 1980; Pellegrini & Galda, 1982). The most common design used in the studies was the pre-test / training (treatment and control)

/ post-test design. In a review of research in this area, Fien states that, "this paradigm has the greatest potential for investigating a variety of outcomes"(1981, p.1109).

Depending on the purpose of the studies, a wide variety of methods have been employed to collect and analyse data. The methods of data collection and analysis that this research study is most interested in are those that are related to oral comprehension (Dansky, 1980; Furman, 1981; Saltz, Dixon & Johnson, 1977) and student attitudes (Gourgey et al, 1985).

When collecting subjects' oral language, similar methods have been employed. Studies have shown that using a visual stimulus as motivation for oral story telling is an effective task for students of various grades and ability levels ( Dansky, 1980; Saltz, Dixon & Johnson, 1977; Stewig & Vail, 1985; Stewig & Young, 1978 ). In addition, tape recording students' oral language for later transcription has been suggested as a reliable and manageable way to gather large amounts of oral data (Dansky, 1980; Stewig & Vail ,1985; Stewig & Young, 1978 ).

The analysis of oral language data differed according to the study. Several studies were concerned with oral language growth ( Stewig & Vail, 1985; Stewig & Young, 1978 ). However, two other studies looked beyond oral language growth and also explored cognitive functioning ( Dansky, 1980; Saltz, Dixon & Johnson, 1977 ). Both of these studies designed a picture story test for the purpose of, (a) assessing story interpretation (Saltz et al, 1977 ), or (b) assessing children's ability to

construct a story that required the translation of details with inferences and predictions based on pictorial information (Dansky, 1980 ). Interpretation was scored on a four point scale of 'storyness' (Dansky, 1980; Saltz et al, 1977 ). Translation of pictorial information was scored on the number of elements in the picture that were mentioned in the story (Dansky, 1980 ). Finally, Dansky (1980) measured his subjects' abilities to make inferences and predictions by the number of elements in the story that transcended what was actually shown in the picture. Scoring for this was based on Weisskopf's (1950) Transcendence Index ( see Appendix 1.).

In a study carried out by Furman (1981), observation was an alternative method used to focus on the behaviours of children that demonstrate oral comprehension skills. Furman suggests that drama can be an excellent medium for observation:

Total absorption in accomplishing drama tasks demands that the person use all available resources, the whole person, and the entire environment. This quality of drama makes it an excellent vehicle for observation (1981, p. 33).

The purpose of Furman's study was to explore the potential of drama as a vehicle for the use of observation instruments. Furman developed an observation checklist in order to evaluate behaviours illustrating Comprehension skills as defined in Bloom's Taxonomy (1950). The checklist was not however, accompanied by sufficient detail to make it a valid and reliable assessment instrument for application in this study. In order to make the checklist operational for the present study it needed to be amended. The methodologies expounded by

applied behaviour analysts provide a sound framework from which to formulate the necessary adjustments.

Fundamental to the task of observing human behaviour is the issue of reliability. If data are unreliable, they are of no value. In the context of behaviour analysis, reliability is clearly defined by Siedentop, Tousignant & Parker (1982) as the degree to which independent observers, utilizing the same definitions and observing the same subjects, agree on what they have observed. In order to achieve a high degree of agreement the reliability of the observers and the clarity of the behavioural definitions are crucial (Foster & Ritchey, 1979).

The main purpose of checking the reliability of data collected through observation instruments is to assess their consistency and objectivity. Limitations in the data gathered from behavioural observation, are often attributed to poor training of the observer, or vague, subjective definitions of the target behaviours (Foster & Ritchey, 1979; Johnson & Frank, 1989). These factors are major sources of error in obtaining valid and reliable data.

Behavioural observations have been employed extensively in a wide variety of studies (Alexander, 1985; Baer, Detrich & Weninger, 1988; Brody, Lahey & Combs, 1978; Haring, Roger, Lee & Breen, 1986; Hay, Nelson & Hay, 1977; Trovato & Buther, 1980). By carefully examining the general procedures of these studies four major steps stand out as ways to maximize the reliability of data collected through behavioural observation :

**1. Definition of target behaviour.** In discussing the issue of measurement in behavioural observation, Alexander (1982) states that human behaviour must be able to be objectively described and measured. By writing unambiguous, objective, comprehensive and mutually exclusive definitions of the target behaviour, researchers can be confident that the dependent variables they wish to measure are, in fact, the ones that are being measured reliably (Baer, Detrich & Weninger, 1988; Johnson & Frank, 1989).

**2. Measurement of target behaviour.** The method of measurement refers to the way in which behaviour will be recorded. There are many different methods of recording behaviour. The method should be decided upon prior to the commencement of the study, so that observers can be trained, and data can be systematically recorded in the same way for the duration of the study (Haring et al, 1986; Hay et al, 1977). Behaviour can, for example, be recorded at regular time intervals (the interval method), or it can be continuously recorded throughout the complete time period (the frequency method) (Siedentop et al, 1982). This study was concerned with recording all observed behaviours illustrative of the target comprehension skills. Therefore, it is the frequency method that was able to make the most valuable contribution to this study.

**3. Inter-observer Agreement.** Inter-observer agreement is a measure of reliability and it refers to the degree of agreement between two independent observers (Hawkins & Fabry, 1979). Inter-observer agreement must be established before the commencement of the study and should also be checked during the course of the study to ensure observers are not 'drifting' from the original definitions (Siedentop et al, 1982). The way in which inter-observer agreement is

calculated depends on the method of measurement chosen by the researcher. Siedentop et al (1982, p.35) state that when using frequency counts, the following method should be used:

Lower number of recorded behaviours.  $X / 100 = \% \text{ of reliability.}$

Higher number of recorded behaviours.

Inter-observer agreement calculations should be done not only on the total number of behaviours recorded but, also on the individual items of target behaviour. This method provides a more rigorous assessment of the reliability of each individual item in the observation instrument (Siedentop et al, 1982).

**4. Training procedures.** Training observers in the use of the observation instruments will have a profound effect upon all possible sources of error (Johnson & Frank, 1989). There should be two major goals of a training programme, the first one being to instruct the observers in the data collection and recording techniques of the instrument. The second goal, which is much harder to achieve, is to ensure that the observers understand the behavioural definitions and can apply them to different behavioural situations (Baer et al, 1988; Johnson & Frank, 1989; Haring et al, 1986; Trovato & Bucher, 1980). The main intent of a training programme is summed up by Johnson & Frank (1989) as the method used to evaluate the observer's progress toward the objective of becoming a skilled observer.

These four main procedural considerations will be utilised in the present study in order to form a framework through which Furman's (1981) observational checklist will be amended and operationalised.

A study carried out by Gourgey et al (1985) explored the effects of a



drama programme on students' attitudes to themselves and others. Seven dimensions of attitude were identified.

1. Self-expression: willingness to participate in class and to share ideas with others.
2. Trust: in other people (peers and adults).
3. Self-acceptance: appreciation of oneself .
4. Acceptance of others: tolerance for others even when they are different from oneself.
5. Self-awareness: awareness of one's feelings and motivations.
6. Awareness of others: awareness of the feelings and motivations of others.
7. Empowerment: a sense of capability and self-importance.

(Gourgey et al, 1985, p.11)

It is hoped that these attitudes would be improved both for their own sake and for their potential impact on students' readiness to learn and subsequent achievement (Gourgey et al, 1985 ).

To assess children's attitudes before and after the drama programme, a Student Attitude Scale and a Teacher Rating Scale were developed. The scales measure the seven dimensions of attitude (see Appendix 5 & 7). These scales were piloted by Gourgey et al (1985) on a sample of 200 students in order to establish reliability.

## **2.6.2 JUSTIFICATION OF THE PRESENT STUDY'S METHODOLOGY.**

The methodology of this study is based on a quasi-experimental design. In discussing this type of design, Seliger & Shohamy (1989, p.148) state that, "they are constructed from situations which already exist in the

real world, and are probably most representative of the conditions found in educational contexts". As this study has been conducted in a school setting and aimed to observe and measure any effects a programme of improvisational dramatics may have on subjects oral comprehension skills and attitudes, a quasi-experimental design was regarded as most appropriate.

The study utilised several methods for data collection, these being a picture-story test (Dansky 1979), an observation checklist (Furman 1981), student attitude scale / teacher rating scale (Gourgey et al, 1985) and semi-structured interviews. All instruments were drawn from previously documented research and have been regarded as appropriate for the following reasons :

1. Previous studies have shown that using visual motivation as a stimulus to oral story telling is effective for students at various grades and ability levels. In addition, they suggest that recording students oral language on tape for later transcription is a reliable way to gather oral data from a large number of subjects (Dansky, 1979; Saltz, Dixon & Johnson, 1977; Stewig & Vail, 1985; Stewig & Young, 1978).
2. The use of observation techniques in assessing student behaviours is well supported by previous studies (Baer et al, 1988; Furman, 1981; Haring et al, 1986; Rosen, 1974; Smilansky, 1990) Furman suggests that drama is a particularly suitable arena for observation, and states that; "Total absorption in accomplishing drama tasks demands that a person use all available resources, the whole person, and the entire environment. This quality of drama makes an excellent vehicle for observation" (1981, p.10).

The methodologies expounded by applied behavioural analysts are primarily concerned with the accurate and reliable measurement of human behaviour. Therefore, it was regarded as appropriate to use these methodological procedures to amend and operationalise Furman's (1981) checklist.

3. The inclusion of Research Questions 2 and 3, which relate to attitude, is based on the rationale that an improvement in attitude has the potential to impact on students readiness to learn and their subsequent achievement. (Gourgey et al, 1985; Huntsman, 1982).

## **2.7 CONCLUSION**

Education, in Australia, is compulsory for all children, until the completion of Year 10. The majority of children's backgrounds prepare them for the school milieu, as their home environments are complementary to that of the school. However, there are a significant number of children whose social backgrounds are in conflict with the school environment and expectations. Given this dichotomy, it is inevitable that problems will arise. The children most commonly found in this situation, who are frequently 'failing' at school, are those from low socio-economic backgrounds. The primary cause for this is the clash of language cultures. These children are not equipped with the language functions required to enable them to cope with the demands of schooling. If these children are to realise their potential, there needs to be an avenue created by which they can access the benefits of education.

As in all areas, appropriate changes are often made through research. That is, before changes are implemented, specific, reliable and concrete data should be obtained that validates the need for change, and suggests a solution.

Oral language is one of the skill areas that children need to be proficient in, in order to learn, and it is suggested that drama offers new possibilities for skill development. However, research in this area is limited. Whilst there are a number of studies researching the use of drama in education, there are few that specifically assess the development of oral *comprehension* skills. To date, a major concern in the field of oral language has been the quantity and quality of production rather than its comprehension of meaning. As Fien states:

Since theorists such as Piaget and Vygotsky stress the meaning or the control functions of language, rather than its productive quality or quantity studies of language meaning (eg comprehension) might have more theoretical significance than studies of language production (1981, p.1102).

Although production is obviously a part of oral language, it is the oral 'illustration' of comprehension that is the concern of this study.

From the review of literature, it can be suggested that drama may affect children's potential to learn. In highlighting the potential that drama has in this area, there are three key elements that must be borne in mind -

1. The learning experience that drama facilitates aims to work ahead of the child's development, thereby upgrading language skills. In addition, through peer collaboration, learning skills are also fostered.

2. The language experience initiated by drama meets children where they are, and then provides opportunities for experimentation with language in a variety of contexts and for a variety of purposes.
3. Drama provides a forum for play, and in so doing, makes the learning an active experience in which the children participate.

Drama can be used with many different populations, but has application for children from low socio-economic backgrounds. These children's needs dovetail neatly into what drama has to offer as an educational tool.

This research into the effects of dramatic improvisational strategies on oral comprehension skills and attitudes is based on the rationale that drama can both develop language functions and enhance learning. Oral comprehension is both a language function and a cognitive skill, and it is this duality that meshes so closely with the features of the dramatic experience.

### **CHAPTER THREE: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

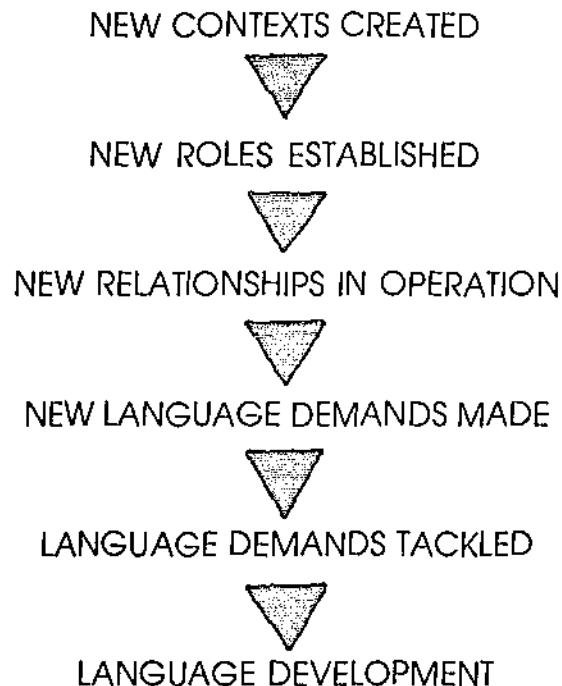
The proposed study is based on the philosophies of learning and language theorists (Bruner, 1986; Dewey, 1915; Erikson, 1950; Halliday, 1978; Piaget, 1967; Vygotsky, 1976) and the theories of drama educationalists (Bolton, 1986; Carroll, 1988; Heathcote, 1980; Way, 1967). The amalgamation of these theories form a comprehensive theoretical framework. The main elements of this framework are the importance of play, the development of language, and the role of the learning experience in the mental development of children.

Various learning theorists (Erikson, 1950; Piaget, 1967; Vygotsky, 1976) claim that engaging in dramatic play is important for normal cognitive development. "In play a child is always above his average age, above his daily behaviour; in play it is as though he were a head taller than himself" (Vygotsky, 1976, p.42). Through the dramatic experience children may pass into a 'play world' where their developing conceptions of the everyday world can be tested without a fear of failure (Bolton, 1986; Landy, 1981). The principles of play and drama stated by Landy (1981) are summarized as follows.

1. The natural method of learning in childhood is play.
2. Play is reality testing, a way for a child to explore and experiment.
3. Whenever there is play, there is drama.
4. Drama is an active rather than a narrative process, involving the whole self including mind, body, emotion and intuition.
5. Drama is a process of learning how to learn.

Closely associated with the relationship between dramatic play and cognitive development, is the relationship between dramatic play and language development. Language is essential to learning (Halliday, 1978; Moffett & Wagner, 1983; Romaine, 1984) but as Halliday suggests, many children from lower class backgrounds may have 'restricted' access to certain function of language which are crucial to their success in traditional educational systems. The dramatic mode however, can provide an infinite range of contexts. It is these contexts, roles and relationships that create different language demands and provide the catalyst for new language use and development. Byron's model offers a clear explanation of how drama can promote language development :-

**FIGURE 3.1 : LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT THROUGH DRAMA.**



**( BYRON, 1988, P.18 )**

For language and mental development to occur, learning must be properly organised (Vygotsky, 1976). Whereas Piaget (1967) views the mental potential of an individual as biological, Vygotsky sees the child, in essence, as being a social being whose higher mental functions originate from actual relations with human individuals. His theory of 'Proximal Development' argues that the sort of thinking the child can do in a group with the aid of a teacher, today, he will be able to do on his own tomorrow (Bruner, 1986). Learning in a group, therefore, fosters cognitive skills that are in advance of development. The work of Heathcote and Bolton in educational drama illustrates Vygotsky's theory of learning and development (Davis, 1986). Their aim is to probe the symbolic meaning of the dramatic encounter in order to elevate the ordinary experience and transcend the individual's understanding, thereby extending their knowledge.

In essence, this study is based on the premise that drama can positively affect children's potential to learn. This belief is validated by learning and language theorists, and drama educationalists.

For this theoretical framework to be fully validated by the present study, the findings presented in Chapter Five would need to indicate the following :

1. The use of dramatic improvisational strategies significantly improved the sample population's oral comprehension skills.
2. The use of dramatic improvisational strategies had a significant effect on the oral comprehension skills that represented higher cognitive processes ( ie.interpretation and extrapolation ).



3. The use of dramatic improvisational strategies significantly improved the sample population's attitudes towards themselves and others.
4. The use of dramatic improvisational strategies contributed to a behavioural change (for attitude and school performance) in the sample population as seen by an outside observer.

## **CHAPTER FOUR: METHODOLOGY.**

### **4.1 THE DESIGN.**

The design of this study was quasi experimental (Gay, 1987) and utilized a mixed method approach to data collection. The design featured a pre-test - training - post-test format (on oral comprehension skills and attitude), with 16 one hour intervening sessions of improvisational drama as the treatment. Participant observation and group interviews with subjects in the treatment group were carried out through the course of the programme. To provide more detailed descriptive data two male and two female students were chosen for case study purposes. Each selected child was systematically observed each week and interviewed three times ( Week 1, Week 2 and Week 8) during the course of the programme (See Figure 4.1: Research Design).

### **4.2 THE SETTING**

The district from which the sample was selected is arguably the most socially and economically disadvantaged local government authority in the Perth metropolitan area. It has the lowest average income of any local metropolitan authority. One quarter of the families with dependent children are headed by single parents, 95% of these being female. Two thirds of school leavers are aged 15 or less, with the Senior High School having one of the lowest retention rates in Australia. Only 25% of students entering Year 8 have gone on to complete Year

**FIGURE 4.1 - RESEARCH DESIGN**

	PRE-TEST	8 WEEKS	POST-TEST
<b>SAMPLE POPULATION</b>  2 x Year 4/5 classes	1. STUDENT ATTITUDE SCALE  2. PICTURE-STORY TEST	<b>TREATMENT</b> Dramatic improvisation programme - 2 x 1 hr sessions/week. Reflection time : Class interview ( tape recorded)	1. STUDENT ATTITUDE SCALE  2. PICTURE-STORY TEST
		CONTROL	
<b>CASE STUDY SUBJECTS:</b> 2 males 2 females (treatment group)		<b>Three interviews during the programme (pre, middle &amp; post) -</b> Pair interview child 1 & 2	
		<b>Three interviews during the programme (pre, middle &amp; post)</b> Pair interview child 3 & 4	
<b>TEACHER</b> - of treatment group	TEACHER RATING SCALE	<b>DURING SESSION 1</b> (ea. week) - Observation checklist used for case study child 1 & 2	1. TEACHER RATING SCALE  2. INTERVIEW
		<b>DURING SESSION 2</b> (ea. week) - Observation checklist used for case study child 3 & 4	
<b>TEACHER</b> - of control group			TEACHER RATING SCALE

12, with no Aboriginal student having completed Year 12 to date. Two thirds of the work force are unskilled and the unemployment rate for 1992 is running at approximately 84% ( This information was obtained from the 'District Priority Schools Programme (P.S.P.) Submission, 1992.' The name of the district and the report's end-text reference has been omitted in order to maintain the anonymity of the schools).

#### **4.3 THE SUBJECTS.**

The subjects selected totaled 56 students. The ages ranged between 9; 2 and 10; 9 years old ( $M = 9; 11$ ). Aboriginal students made up 20% of the sample population. The remaining 80% was mainly made up of non-aboriginal Australians and 2nd/3rd generation English immigrants. The sample consisted of two Year 4/5 classes from two neighbouring Primary Schools in the same District. Subjects were assigned to the treatment and control conditions as intact classes. Neither random selection of subjects nor random assignment of conditions was possible due to limitations posed by the schools. All subjects were classed as being of a low socio economic status.

#### **4.4 THE INTERVENTION.**

One of the intact classes was assigned to the treatment condition and the other received no treatment, but continued their normal classroom programme.

#### **4.4.1 THE IMPROVISATIONAL DRAMATICS PROGRAMME.**

In order to explore the potential effects of dramatic improvisational strategies on the development of oral comprehension skills and attitudes of children with a low socio-economic background, a drama programme had to be designed. The form, focus and structure of that programme is discussed below.

In mainstream education children learn about what Heathcote (1988, p22) terms 'over-there' knowledge. However, inside the drama frame children learn skills and knowledge that are from first hand experience. This is because they are placed *inside* a situation or story. The purpose of this research study was to observe and measure the potential effects of dramatic improvisational strategies on the development of oral comprehension skills and attitudes of children with a low socio-economic background. Because the means of testing the oral comprehension skills was through story, the focus of the drama programme was the children's *storytelling* and *narrative* skills. This focus was intentionally restricted in order to control the genre used, and develop the children's sense of story. In doing so, it would then be possible to ascertain whether being immersed '*inside the story*' had or had not enhanced the subjects' oral comprehension skills and attitudes. It must be noted however, that although the drama programme targetted story telling and narrative structure, it was not designed to teach to the test. There were many opportunities in the dramas for the children to use the skills of translation, interpretation and extrapolation, but none of the lessons utilised pictures as a stimulus for practicing storytelling.

The drama programme used several different types of improvisational strategies (storybuilding, puppetry, 'in-role' drama) although, 'in-role' drama was the technique most used. 'In-role' drama occurs, "when both students and teacher are behaving 'as if' they are someone else facing an imaginary situation" (Carroll, 1988, p.13). The framed context that the participants of the 'in-role' drama were involved in allowed both the the participant and the spectator, the real world and the fictitious, to be present at the same time (Bolton, 1985; Carroll, 1988; Wagner, 1976). Children behaving 'as if' they were archeologists at the newly opened excavation site, found 'in-role' a new courage (within the safety of make believe) to experiment and explore knowledge. The meaning and the potency of the dramas lay in this dialectical experience.

The uniqueness of the dramas was not limited to its inherent dichotomy. Its didactic value is also different to the mainstream. Whereas conventional teaching methods select a skill and then systematically instruct, drama selects the skill then identifies a task which requires the use of the selected skill. It, therefore, fosters the skill development through the task, utilizing the motivation of the 'in-role' (Carroll, 1984; O'Toole, 1990). In this programme, narrative skills were selected (eg; deciphering segmented texts, sequencing segmented texts, creating original story endings, storybuilding, story-telling...). Then dramatic contexts were constructed in order to set the scenes for the tasks, that were created specifically to develop narrative skills. For example, the challenge for the children as archeologists was to find the meaning of the nine ancient scrolls for the Egyptian Government. This dramatic

context and task was constructed specifically to foster the skill of deciphering fragmented text.

The dramas that made up the programme were task, and not skill orientated. The children had the opportunity to learn and develop the specific skills because they needed them to accomplish the *task*. The nature of the teacher's role in the dramas was to facilitate the children's learning by using techniques like dramatic tension, questioning, 'role', and pace, thereby facilitating the completion of the task which in turn facilitated the acquisition of the skill.

To set up a drama that had meaning for the participants it had to be driven by dramatic tension (Durham University, 1982; O'Toole, 1990). Dramatic tension is not the action; it is what motivates the action. For example, the tension of the unsolved mystery of the ancient scrolls motivated the archeologists into the action of deciphering them.

Questioning is one of the drama teacher's most useful tools. Questions were used to establish the context of the drama; during the lesson to involve the participants and to deepen and focus their thinking; and after the lesson, to reflect upon and evaluate the experience (Neelands, 1984; Wagner, 1976). In conventional teaching, questioning is often a way to gain information and check facts. The 'correct' answer already lies in the teacher's head and the children must guess at the answer the teacher wants. Questioning in the dramas had a very different purpose. In the drama, there was no right answer because the questions were open-ended, wondering, and supposing questions that invited assistance from the group. The questions the teacher asked

need to be carefully thought out because it was vital that the children's responses were accepted and valued.

The use of teacher-in-role was another very effective teaching technique used in the dramas. In 'role' the teacher could create the tension, raise the group's emotional commitment to the drama and unify the group towards a common goal. In the drama programme that was designed for this study the researcher chose to limit her use of role to those of 'middle-rank position' (Wagner, 1976). In these roles the drama teacher could communicate freely with those of both higher and lower rank, and have ample power but, not enough power to make final decisions. This was left to the children.

In order to deepen the level of the experience the pace of the drama was often manipulated by the drama teacher . It was sometimes slowed right down in order to upgrade the children's language and heighten the significance of a moment. It was also stopped in order to get the children to reflect on what had happened. As Heathcote points out, "This process is the education of feeling. Feeling without reflection may simply be experienced and forgotten; with reflection it can become an insight, an understanding that makes possible later modification of behaviour in the real world" (Wagner, 1976, p.78).

The drama programme that was designed for the purpose of this study was conducted by the researcher who has had training in drama techniques as part of her Bachelor of Education. It consisted of two one-hour sessions per week and was of 8 weeks duration (For a detailed account of the sixteen lessons, refer to Appendix 9).



#### **4.4.2 VERIFICATION OF THE INDEPENDENT VARIABLE.**

It was essential that the validity of the both the treatment and control condition be established. It was particularly important to validate the control condition, as that programme was being conducted by another teacher. In order to ensure this, several steps had to be taken.

##### **VERIFICATION OF THE CONTROL CONDITION.**

The teacher of the control group tape-recorded all the lessons conducted during the study's 8- week period that had an oral language focus. At the completion of the study these tapes were collected by the researcher. To verify the format of these lessons, and to identify the techniques used, a 15- minute random sample was audited from every lesson. This resulted in 18 lessons being sampled.

As a result of careful examination of the samples the following observations were made by the researcher;

- A variety of oral communication strategies were used during these lessons. Children participated in newstelling, barrier games (First Steps: Literacy Related Skills; Description ), partner work, small group discussion, circle stories, oral sharing of work and debates. The format of these lessons ranged from specific oral language lessons to lessons that integrated the oral language goals into other areas of the curriculum.

- In the lessons examined there was no evidence of any 'in-role' drama strategies being used by the teacher of the control group.

##### **VERIFICATION OF THE TREATMENT CONDITION.**

In order to have a comprehensive record of the drama programme developed for the treatment group, the researcher collected data from several different sources. Firstly, the researcher maintained a

written programme of all drama lessons conducted. Secondly, at the end of each lesson detailed case notes were made (modifications, alterations made to lessons) and these were verified and signed by the classroom teacher. Finally, in addition to these written records, there was the audio-taped record of each lesson's reflection time. From this data a detailed account of the sixteen lessons was compiled (The lesson plans are displayed in Appendix 9 ).

#### **4.5 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS.**

The main ethical consideration in this study was the collection of data from minors. Therefore, it was essential that 'informed consent' was gained from each participating child and a parent or guardian of each child. Before the commencement of the research programme a letter was sent out which informed children and parents/guardians of the nature of the research programme. Only the children who returned a signed 'Informed Consent' form were used in this study ('Form of Disclosure and Informed Consent', see Appendix 10).

#### **4.6 INSTRUMENTS.**

In order to answer the research questions posed by this study the following data collection instruments were selected:

##### **Pre-and Post- Assessment.**

**1. Picture- Story.** This measure is based on the picture - story task designed by Dansky (1979) and Saltz et al (1977). The purpose of this

measure was to assess the subjects' ability to produce verbalizations that illustrated Comprehension skills as determined by Bloom (1956), in response to meaningful visual stimuli. The children's oral stories were tape recorded and later transcribed. The transcripts were analysed using three indices relating to the three individual comprehension skills (See Appendix 2). Inter-rater reliability was calculated using a random sample that represented 20 % of the total sum of the transcribed stories. The level of agreement between raters (the researcher and an independent scorer), was evaluated on each of the three separate indices. Because recording was in the form of frequency counts, the method of calculating reliability was as follows:

$$\frac{\text{Lower number of tallies recorded}}{\text{Higher number of tallies recorded}} \times 100 = \% \text{ of reliability}$$

(Siedentop et al, 1982, p.35)

This procedure was carried out on the pre-test and post-test data (For agreement levels for the three indices, refer to Table 4.1, p. 58).

The test was administered in the form of a game in an aim to minimise apprehension on the behalf of the subject and to provide a logical purpose for story telling. Individually, each child was shown a selection of four pictures and asked to choose one. The pictures that were used were taken from the picture book 'Magic Beach' by Alison Lester. They were regarded as suitable because each picture contained the same characters, contained a similar amount of detail, and were fantasy based. The researcher and child discussed the chosen picture briefly and then the task was explained to them (Discussion questions are detailed in Appendix 2). A second child was then shown the four

pictures and told they would hear a story and at the end must guess which picture the story was based on. The story told by the first child was tape recorded for later transcription. For the administration of the post-test, the subjects were shown the same pictures but asked to make a different choice.

**2. The Student Attitude Scale** (These are presented in Appendices 5 & 6). The scale has been developed by Gourgey, Bosseau and Delgado (1985) for the purpose of measuring seven dimensions of attitude: self expression, trust in others, self acceptance, acceptance of others, self awareness, awareness of others and empowerment. The scale contains 35 items, 5 per sub-scale. Subjects were asked to indicate a level of agreement or disagreement with each item on a three point scale: Agree (scores 3), Not sure (scores 2), or disagree (scores 1). Scoring on negatively worded items was reversed. Total scores were computed by summing responses for the total scale and for the seven sub-scales with high scores indicating more favourable attitudes. Possible range of scores for the Student Attitude Scale was 35 - 105.

**3. Teaching Rating Scale** (These are presented in Appendices 7 & 8). Gourgey et al (1985) have also developed a 40- item scale to provide additional assessment of attitudinal and academic behavioural changes in the subjects. Items are included that reflect the same dimensions of attitude included in the Student Attitude Scale as well as items relating to the subjects school work behaviours. The teachers were asked to rate their class as a group by responding to each item on a five point Likert Scale ranging from High (5) to Low (1). Scoring on

negatively worded items was reversed and responses were summed for overall rating, with a high score indicating a favourable assessment. Possible range of scores for the Teacher Rating Scale was 40 - 200.

**4. Post- Interview; Classroom Teacher.** This interview was conducted for the purpose of gaining feedback from the teacher of the treatment group. The interview was semi-structured and based on open-ended questions to allow the teacher to talk as freely as possible about her perceptions of, and response to, the Improvisational Dramatics Programme.

## **ONGOING ASSESSMENT.**

**1. Class Interviews.** At the close of each drama session there was a 5-10 minute reflection time for the whole class. This process of reflection is central to learning within the dramatic process. "Reflection is what makes the knowing something that can be touched and assimilated for later use. What the right hemisphere of the brain has pulled together, the left hemisphere analyzes, codifies and stores" (Wagner, 1976, p.78). These sessions were of an unstructured nature and were tape recorded so they could be re-examined later.

**2. Observation Checklist** (These are presented in Appendices 3 & 4). This checklist was a amended version of the checklist developed by Furman (1981). The purpose of the behaviour assessment instrument was to record behaviours illustrative of comprehension skills (Bloom, 1956). The checklist itemised four classes of behaviour , one for translation, one for interpretation, and two for extrapolation. Below

each item was a space for the observer to record rateable behaviours viewed during the lesson in the form of a tally. At the completion of the lesson the observer would then add together the tallies and record a total score at the bottom of each observation checklist. There was also a space for the observer to record any descriptive data they felt may have been useful. The checklist was used to observe the four case study subjects during the entire course of the programme. The rater observed two of the selected subjects each session.

#### DEFINITION OF TARGET BEHAVIOUR.

The target behaviours were as follows. The ability to -

1. Translate information from a non-verbal form to a verbal form (translation).
2. Grasp the concept of 'the work' as a whole (interpretation).
3. Infer details about a character, context, or action (extrapolation).
4. Predict a continuation of trends (extrapolation).

( The complete operational definitions are listed in Appendix 3)

#### METHOD OF MEASUREMENT.

In each lesson the observer was required to observe two case study children. All target behaviours exhibited within the one hour period were noted, and were recorded on the respective child's checklist under the appropriate item. The dependent measure has been expressed as a total score for each class of behaviour over the one hour period.

#### INTER-OBSERVER AGREEMENT.

To establish inter-observer reliability a second observer independently recorded data during the first week of the programme and again

during the fifth week. Independent recording was necessary so that the observations of one recorder did not influence the observations of another. This was achieved by having the recorders sit or stand at least 10-12 feet apart (As recommended by, Siedentop, Tousignant & Parker, 1982). Recording was in the form of frequency counts, therefore, the method used to calculate inter-observer reliability was the same as that used for the Picture-Story Test. Calculations of reliability were done for the whole checklist and for each class of behaviour. Inter-observer reliability was established before the commencement of the observation study and again during the fifth week. A reliability level of 90+% was regarded as acceptable. (For inter-observer agreement levels for the observation checklist, refer to Table 4.2).

#### TRAINING PROCEDURE.

Initial training consisted of instructing the two observers in the observation procedure. They were given detailed written instructions describing the observation techniques. In addition, the procedure was discussed with each observer, and the importance of obtaining objective and accurate data in order to evaluate the intervention procedures was emphasized. During the first week of the drama programme the two observers were given the opportunity to practise using the checklist. Inter-observer agreement was calculated for those two lessons and reached a reliability level of 96.75%. It was decided therefore, that the observation checklist was sufficiently reliable for use in this study. The results obtained in Weeks 2 to 8 of the programme form the substantive data for the study.

**3. Pair Interviews** The four case study children were interviewed by the researcher three times (Weeks 2, 5 & 8) during the programme. The

**TABLE 4.1- INTER-RATER AGREEMENT LEVELS FOR PICTURE-STORY TEST.**

INDICES	PRE-TEST AGREEMENT LEVELS	POST-TEST AGREEMENT LEVELS
TRANSLATION.	100%	100%
INTERPRETATION	87.67%	90.72%
EXTRAPOLATION	90.14%	92.95%

**TABLE 4.2 - INTER-OBSERVER AGREEMENT LEVELS FOR THE OBSERVATION CHECKLIST.**

CHECKLIST ITEMS.	PRE-TEST AGREEMENT LEVELS.	MID-TEST AGREEMENT LEVELS (Week Five).
ITEM ONE.	100%	88%
ITEM TWO.	100%	100%
ITEM THREE.	87%	87.9%
ITEM FOUR.	100%	86.3%
TOTAL ITEMS.	96.75%	90.55%



children were interviewed in pairs in an aim to minimize apprehension. Interviews focused on the children's interest in school work, the drama activities, the emotions they may have felt in certain roles, and their comprehension of what was explored in the session. The interviews were tape recorded so they could be re-examined later.

#### **4.7 DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURES**

At the commencement of the third term, permission to participate in the study was sought from students in the two classes and a parent or guardian of each student. During the first week of term pre-testing of all subjects was carried out and two girls and two boys (from the treatment group only) were selected for the case study. Case study subjects were not randomly selected due to the problem of absenteeism. Instead, the classroom teacher selected two girls and two boys who had good attendance but whom she felt lacked communication skills and confidence. Therefore, these children were considered by the classroom teacher to be poorer communicators than the average.

The first week of the drama programme was used to train and familiarise observers with the observation procedure. The Improvisational Dramatics Programme ran for a total of eight weeks, during which time data was collected from the group interviews and from the four case study subjects. Post-testing of all subjects was carried out in the last week of term. Debriefing of subjects in both the treatment and control groups was carried out when all data had been collected.

#### 4.8 DATA ANALYSIS PROCEDURES

The data collected during the study was analyzed using inferential statistics, graphical displays and qualitative descriptions. The following steps were taken to answer the research questions (refer to Figure 4.2 : Justification of the Data Collection Methods).

- 1) Will there be an observable and measurable change in the skills of translation, interpretation and extrapolation in the sample population?

**Picture-Story Scales.** Programme effects on oral comprehension were determined by an analysis of covariance on the post-test scores for translation, interpretation and extrapolation with their respective pre-test scores as the covariate. The level of significance was set at 0.05. In addition to this statistical analysis, the treatment and control group means were graphically displayed. This was done in order to clearly illustrate the direction of the difference between the pre- and post-test results for the two groups.

**Observation Checklist.** Data from the checklist was displayed in a graph depicted as follows; Each week, each case study child was observed and awarded a score for each target behaviour. Four graphs were constructed, each one corresponding to one of the target behaviours. The children's weekly scores were then plotted on the appropriate line graph. Using line graphs was justified as their purpose was to show continuous change over the duration of the

**FIGURE 4.2 - JUSTIFICATION OF DATA COLLECTION METHODS.**

INSTRUMENTS USED FOR DATA COLLECTION	RESEARCH QUESTIONS					
	1.1	1.2	1.3	2	3	
Student attitude scale				*		
Teacher rating scale					*	
Class interviews	*	*	*	*		
Pair interviews	*	*	*	*		
Teacher interview	*	*	*	*	*	
Observation checklist	*	*	*			
Picture-story test	*	*	*			

study. At the conclusion of the programme, four line graphs were completed (one graph for each target behaviour) which represented the performance of each child in the four skill areas.

- (2) Does the use of dramatic improvisational strategies change, to an assessable degree, children's attitudes towards themselves and others.

**Student Attitude Scale.** Programme effects on the subjects' attitude was to be determined by an analysis of covariance on post-test scores for the total scale and for the seven sub-scales, with the respective pre-test scores as the covariate. However, because the scores of the treatment and control group were so different at pre-test this form of statistical analysis was regarded as not suitable (for further discussion of this, refer to Chapter 5). Instead, paired t tests were used in order to determine if the pre- and post-test means for the two groups were significantly different at the 0.05 probability level. In addition to this statistical analysis, the treatment and control group means for the total scale and for the seven sub-scales, were graphed. This was done in order to clearly illustrate the direction of the difference between the pre- and post-test results for the two groups.

- (3) Does the use of dramatic improvisational strategies change teachers' ratings of the students attitudes?

**Teacher Rating Scale.** The teachers' ratings (for both treatment and control groups) of the overall attitudes of their classes pre and post were summarised in a table (The data is presented in Table 5.2).

**Interviews.** Data collected from interviews (case study subjects, class & teacher of the treatment group) were examined in order to explore possible themes, and to note significant comments. These have been presented as descriptive data and are included in Chapters 5 and 6.

The findings resulting from the above analyses are set out in Chapter Five.

## **CHAPTER FIVE : RESULTS.**

This chapter presents the analysed data that was collected from the various data collection instruments used in this study. It is divided into four main sections. The first details the results for the research question that was concerned with the sample's oral comprehension skills. The second and third detail the results for the two research questions that apply to the children's attitude towards themselves and others. In the final section the findings are summarised in relation to the research questions.

### **5.1. WILL THERE BE A CHANGE IN THE ORAL COMPREHENSION SKILLS OF CHILDREN EXPOSED TO DRAMATIC IMPROVISATIONAL STRATEGIES ?**

The effects of the drama programme on oral comprehension were determined using data gathered from two alternative sources. Firstly, *behavioural observation* (using the observation checklist) was used to provide data on four case study subjects that represented the lower achievers in the sampled classroom. Secondly, the *Picture-Story Test* indices were used to provide data on all subjects pre- and post- the programme. An analysis of co-variance was calculated on the Picture-Story post-test scores for translation, interpretation and extrapolation, with their respective pre-test scores as the covariate. These two different sources of data were used in order to examine both the performance of the entire group and, the performance of four children who had been targeted as less capable in normal classroom contexts. This data supplies two different vantage points from which to access the development of these children's oral comprehension skills.

For each oral comprehension skill the following results are detailed: the analysis of covariance calculated on the Picture-Story Test score, a graph of the group means for the Picture-Story test and the observational data from the four case study subjects.

#### **5.1.1 TRANSLATION.**

The analysis of co-variance indicated a significant difference in translation scores between the treatment and control groups.

$F(1, 47) = 4.05, p < 0.05$ .

In order to identify the direction of the difference between the two groups, the group means for translation are graphically displayed in Figure 5.1. This figure shows that although the treatment group's pre-test group mean for translation was lower than the control group's, by the completion of the study its post-test group mean surpassed that of the control group's. Therefore, the figure indicates that the treatment group produced significantly higher post-test results for translation than the control group.

The performance of the four case study subjects in the skill area of translation (Target Behaviour 1) is graphically displayed in Figure 5.2. This figure indicates that each subject did improve over the duration of the study. Subject 3 showed an improvement of two points, while the three other subjects showed an improvement of one point. Taking into account that this improvement in the skill of translation occurred over a period of 7 weeks, it is regarded as gradual. This gradually inclining

Figure 5.1

Group Means for Translation Scores in the Picture-Story Test

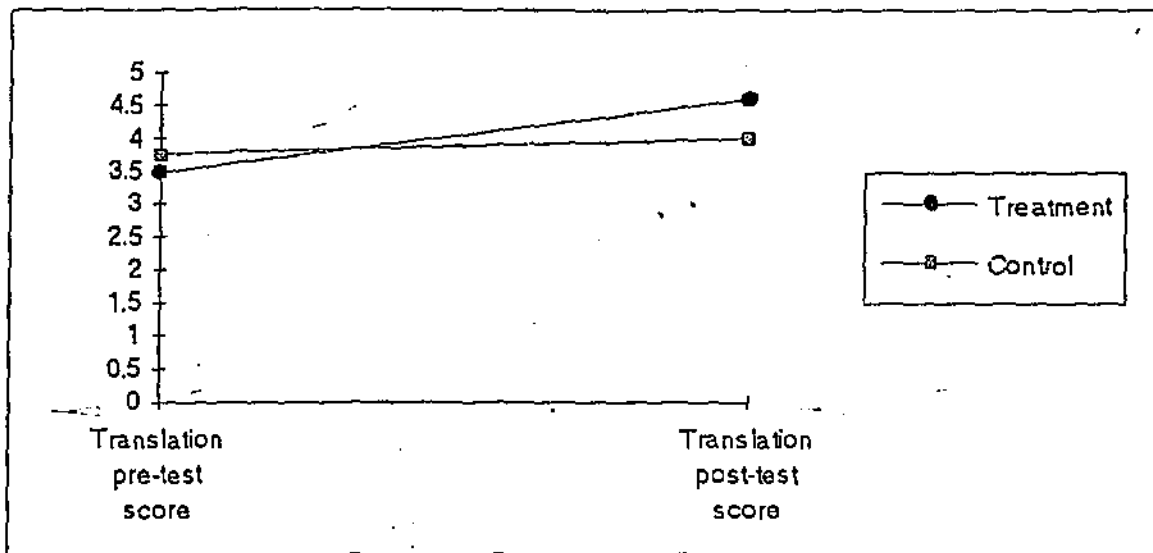
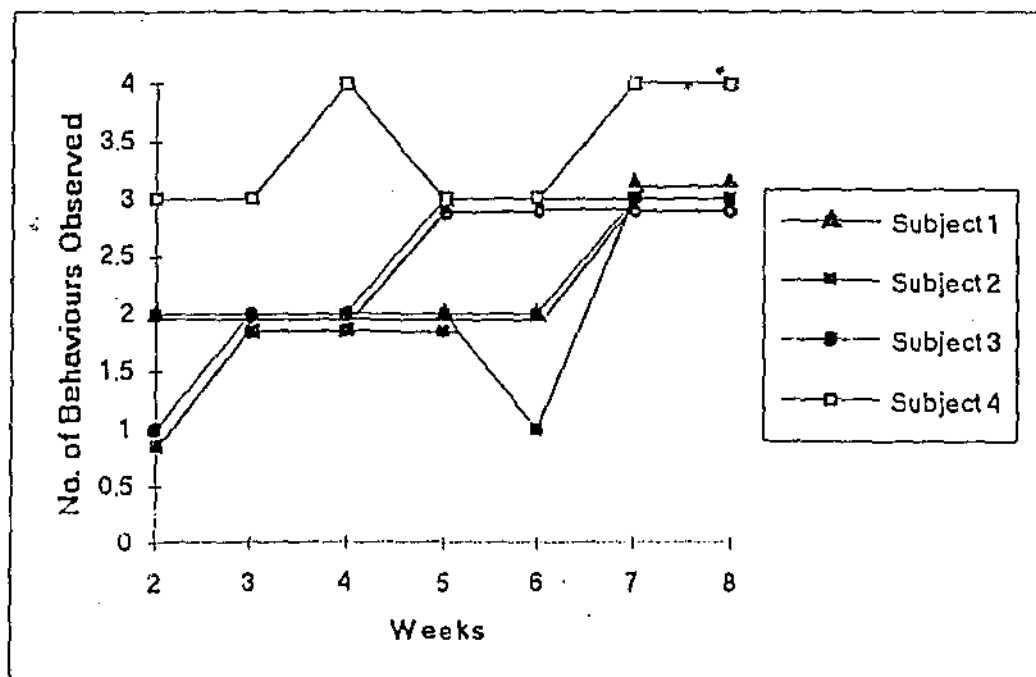


Figure 5.2

The Performance of the Four Case Study Subjects for Target Behaviour One (Translation)





trend represented in Figure 5.1 clearly corresponds to the gradual increase of the treatment's post-test group mean shown in Figure 5.2.

The drama tasks that were used in the programme often required children to translate the given information into a verbal form. Some examples of this were, the historians presenting detailed descriptions of their antique statues, or, the archeologists recalling all the information contained in the scrolls in order to present their final interpretation of the cryptic story. The following comments illustrate how the dramatic contexts and roles provided children with the motivation to *persist* and *practice* this skill.

Being a historian was really cool. I soon realized but, if I was going to do my job properly I had to look really carefully so I could work out what it all was, and then eventually what it meant (Case Study Subject 2).

I felt like I was a good archeologist because I was really searching for as much information as I could (Case Study Subject 4).

### **5.1.2. INTERPRETATION.**

The analysis of co-variance indicated a significant difference in interpretation scores between the treatment and control groups,  $F(1, 47) = 31.35, p < 0.001$ .

In order to identify the direction of the difference between the two groups, the group means for interpretation are graphically displayed in

Figure 5.3. Once again, the graph indicates that the treatment group's pre-test group mean for interpretation was lower than the control group's, but, by the completion of the study the treatment group's post-test group mean surpassed that of the control's. Therefore, it indicates that it is the treatment group that produced significantly higher post-test results for interpretation.

The performance of the four case study subjects in the skill area of interpretation (Target Behaviour 2) is graphically displayed in Figure 5.4. This figure shows that each subject did improve over the duration of the study. Subject number four showed the an improvement of four points, subject one, an improvement of three points and subjects two and three, showed an improvement of two points. Although two of the subjects scored zero for this skill over the first 2 weeks and one scored zero for the first 3, the figure still shows an inclining trend for the skill of interpretation. This moderately inclining trend, shown in Figure 5.4 clearly corresponds to the inclining trend shown in Figure 5.3.

The skill of interpretation required the students to discover meanings contained in various forms of information. Finding universal meanings in the dramas was very important. This was often the focus in reflection times during and after the dramas . The questioning techniques employed and the nature of the reflective process gave children the *encouragement* to move into more abstract modes of thinking. This is illustrated in the following examples taken from class reflection times.

I think wars are about greed, for sure. People taking what they want and not caring about what other people need or want  
(Reflection Period; Lesson 10).

Figure 5.3

Group Means for Interpretation Scores in the Picture-Story Test

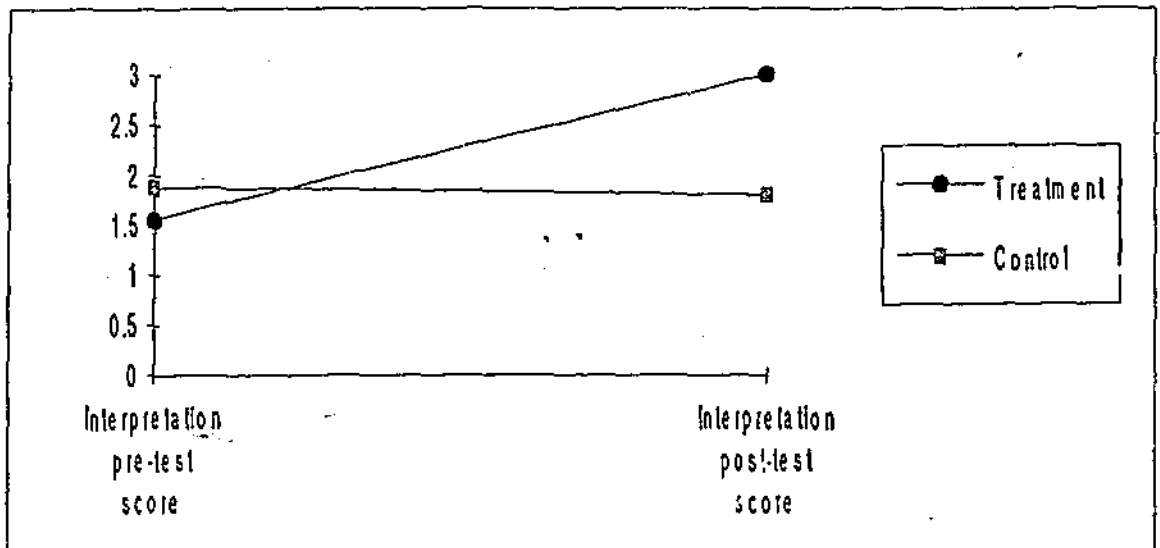
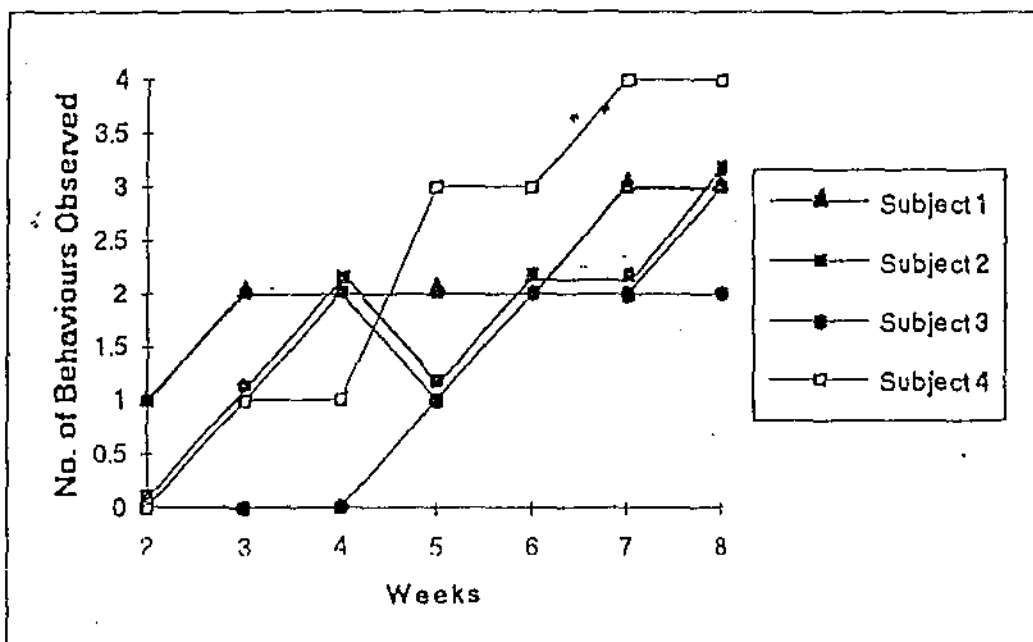


Figure 5.4

The Performance of the Four Case Study Subjects for Target Behaviour Two (Interpretation)



I think this statue represents loyalty and friendship, the kind that never runs out (Reflection Period; Lesson 13).

### **5.1.3 EXTRAPOLATION.**

The analysis of co-variance indicated a significant difference in extrapolation scores between the treatment and control groups,  $F(1, 47) = 31.35, p < 0.001$ .

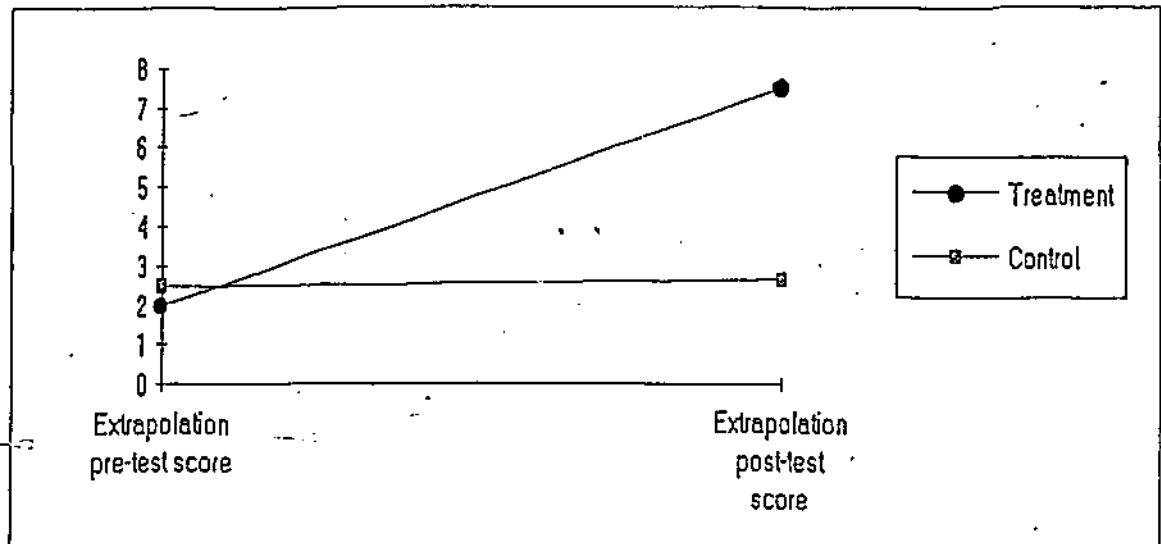
In order to identify the direction of the difference between the two groups, the group means for extrapolation are graphically displayed in Figure 5.5. Similar to the results for translation and interpretation, the figure shows that the treatment group's pre-test group mean for extrapolation was lower than the control group. By the completion of the study however, the treatment group's post-test group mean was greater. This clearly indicates that it was the treatment group that produced significantly higher post-test scores for extrapolation.

The performance of the four case study subjects in the skill area of extrapolation (Target Behaviours 3 & 4) is graphically displayed in Figure 5.6 and Figure 5.7. Target Behaviour 3 refers to the subject's ability to infer details about a character, context, or action. Target Behaviour 4 is more complex and requires the subject to predict a continuation of trends that is beyond a single event. Both Figure 5.6 and 5.7 show that each subject did improve in both skills over the duration of the study.

Figure 5.6 displays a particularly dramatic improvement in this skill of extrapolation. Subject 4 showed an improvement of five points,

**Figure 5.5**

**Group Means for Extrapolation Scores in the Picture-Story Test**



**Figure 5.6**

**The Performance of the Four Case Study Subjects for Target Behaviour Three (Extrapolation)**

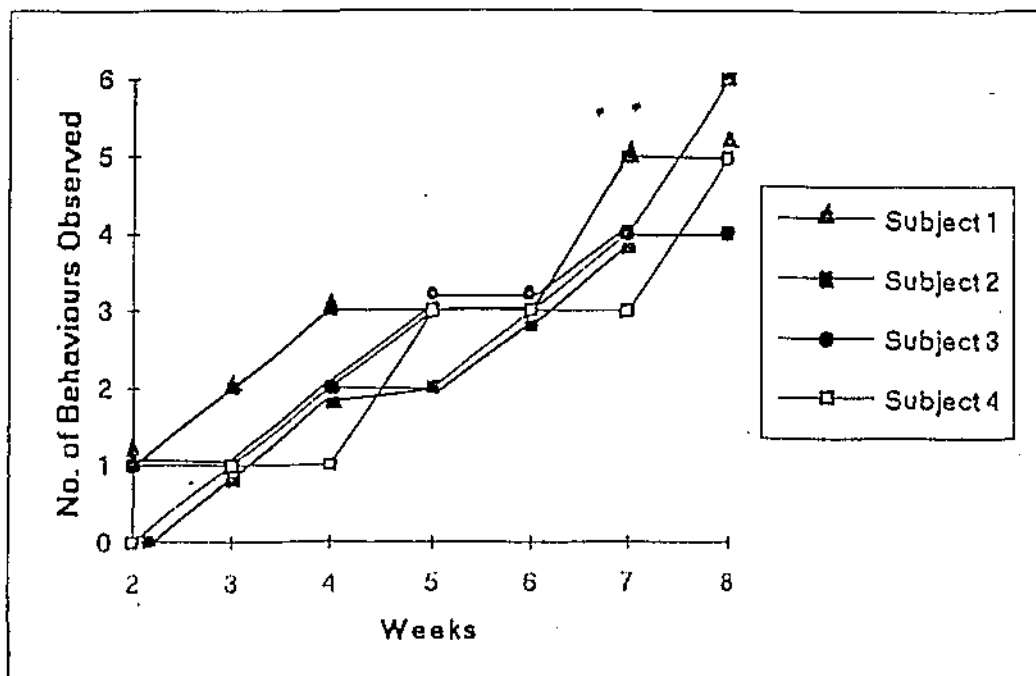
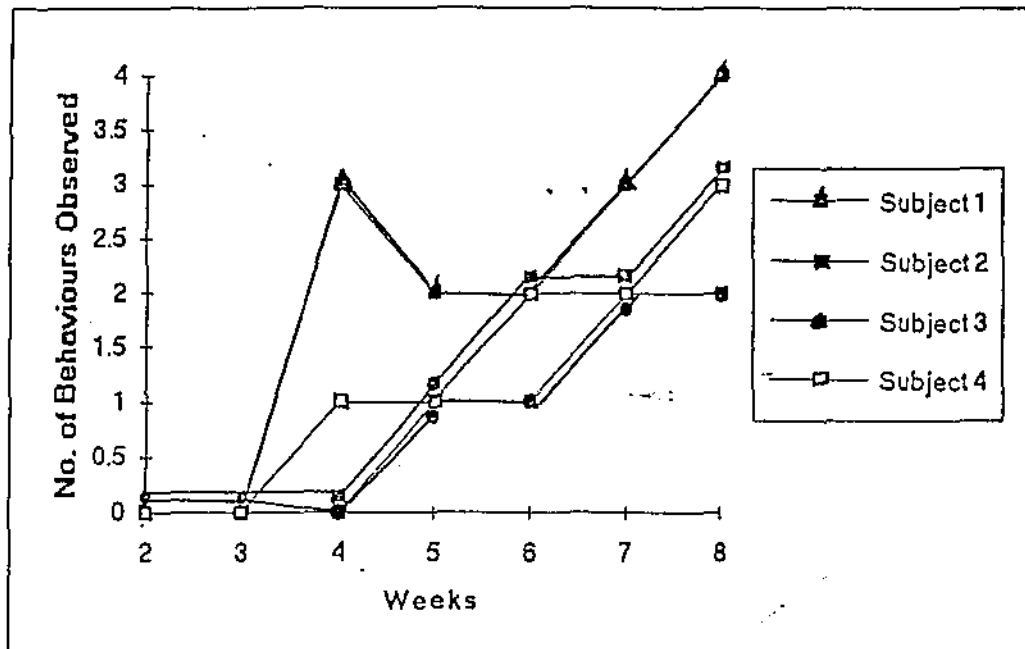


Figure 5.7

The Performance of the Four Case Study Subjects for Target Behaviour Four (Extrapolation)



Subjects 1 and 2, an improvement of four points and Subject 3, showed an improvement of three points. The degree of improvement in Target Behaviour 3 which is illustrated in Figure 5.6, clearly corresponds to the degree of improvement shown in the treatment group's Picture-Story results for extrapolation, shown in Figure 5.5.

The pattern displayed in Figure 5.7 is unique to this graph. Three of the subjects scored zero for this skill over the first 3 weeks of the programme, and the fourth subject scored zero until Week 5. Despite the late start on behalf of all the subjects, this figure shows a high degree of improvement in the last 3 to 4 weeks. Subject 2 showed an improvement of four points, Subject 1 and 4, an improvement of three points and Subject 3, showed an improvement of two points. Although this skill of extrapolation did not show as great an improvement as Target Behaviour 3 the late start of all the subjects suggests that this target behaviour was harder for them to master. When the subjects did start to register on the graph however, it is interesting to note that their improvement was quite dramatic.

The skill of extrapolation required the children to make inferences and predictions based on specific experiences. Many of the drama contexts employed in this programme required the children to behave 'as if' they were someone else facing an imaginary situation. These contexts stimulate the children's ability to imagine and therefore, their ability to speculate, predict, hypothesize and make inferences from given information (Tupman, 1987, p.13). The following comments illustrate the children's increased awareness of their imaginations by the end of the programme.

I felt like drama helped me use my imagination and now instead of hanging around the house and being bored I do a lot more with my free time, you know pretend things, play games and that (Case Study Subject 1).

I've got better in the dramas at imagining things are really there, when they aren't really there. You kind of get to understand more of what's going on when that happens and be able to guess more things about the people, the places, or maybe what might happen next (Case Study Subject 3).

In summary, these analyses addressed the first research question outlined at the beginning of Section 5.1. The analyses show that both sources of data (observational & testing ) provided compatible findings. They demonstrate that the programme of dramatic improvisational strategies had a positive, measurable and observable, effect on the treatment groups' skill of translation, interpretation and extrapolation.

The observational data shows that the drama programme was an effective method for improving the oral comprehension skills of the four children that represented the *lower achievers* in the class. Comments made by both the case study children and the classroom teacher indicate that the drama programme was successful in improving their confidence, work attitude and therefore, subsequent achievement.

Case study subject 2's performance has really surprised me. His involvement in the dramas has been full on and enthusiastic. He's been a good thinker and right up there with it the whole



way through. Not off task at all ! (Classroom Teacher).

I like that in drama we get to play things out as well as do reading and writing. In class all we do is writing things (Case Study Subject 4).

Deciding how to wake up Ozymandias was really exciting and I really liked it that my idea was used by everyone (Case Study Subject 2).

## **5.2. DOES THE USE OF DRAMATIC IMPROVISATIONAL STRATEGIES CHANGE, TO AN ASSESSABLE DEGREE, CHILDREN'S ATTITUDES TOWARDS THEMSELVES AND OTHERS ?**

The effects of the drama programme on children's attitude towards themselves and others was determined using the *student attitude scale* by Gourgey, Bosseau and Delgado (1985) (pre- and post-). The results of this scale were going to be analysed like the oral comprehension skills, using an analysis of covariance on post-test scores for the total scale and for the seven sub-scales, with the respective pre-test scores as the covariate. However, after the completion of the study, when the data had been carefully examined, it was found that this form of statistical analysis was not suitable. This was due to the fact that the two groups were so different at pre-test. This problem was highlighted when the group means for total attitude and the seven sub-scales of attitude were graphed. It became apparent that although in several cases the treatment group showed a much larger improvement than the control group, due to the large

difference between them at the beginning, the treatment group's post-test result were not even enough to bring them up to the control group's initial score (For example, see Figure 5.8). Because of this situation, it was more appropriate to use paired t tests as a means of analysis. The two groups' pre- and post-test means were analysed independently and then their t values were calculated in order to see if the pre- and post-test scores were significantly different at the 0.05 probability level.

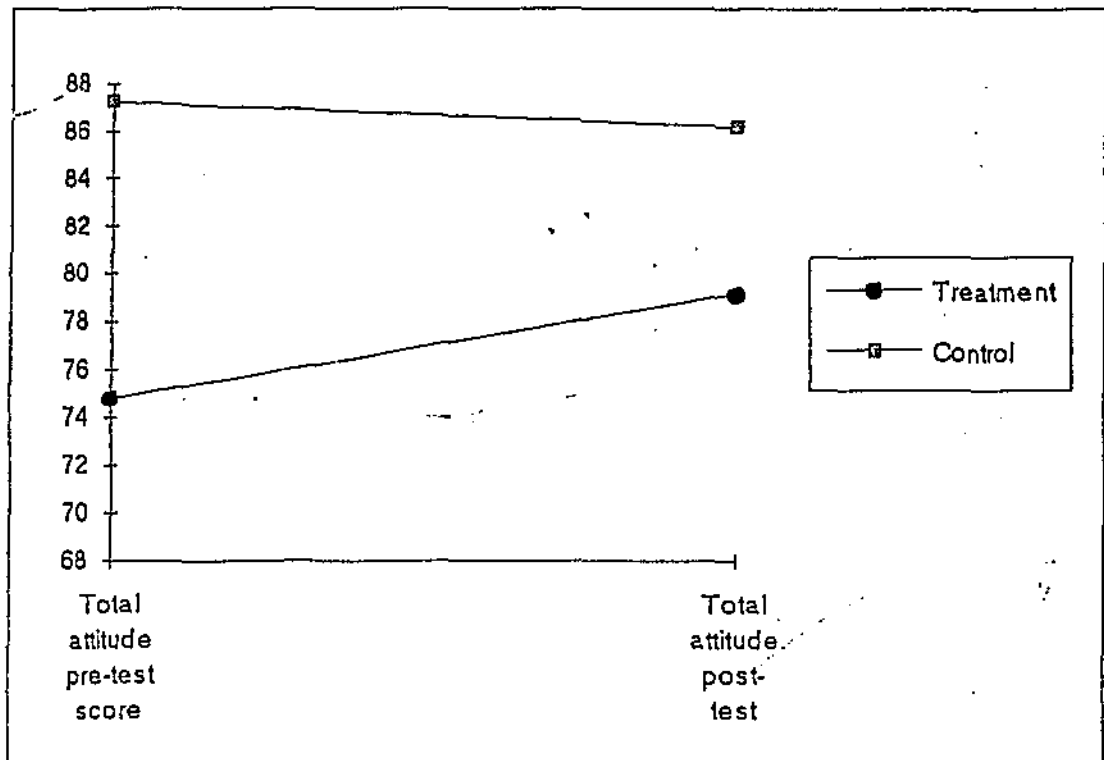
The result of the paired t test on the treatment and control groups' pre- and post-test means for *total* attitude, indicated a significant difference between the pre-test ( $M = 74.80$ ) and the post-test ( $M = 79.19$ ) for the treatment group,  $t(25) = 2.21, p < 0.05$ . It did not however, indicate a significant difference between the pre-test ( $M = 87.24$ ) and the post-test ( $M = 86.20$ ) for the control group,  $t(25) = 0.42, p > 0.05$ . The group means for total attitude are graphically displayed in Figure 5.8. The graph and the treatment group's pre- and post-test group means clearly indicate that the difference in the group means for the treatment group is a positive one. That is, the treatment group's total attitude scores *improved* significantly over the duration of the programme. The control group's total attitude scores however, did not improve. The improvement in the treatment group's overall attitude is exemplified in the following comment.

Drama has made me feel more confident. I feel like I'm good at it and so I like getting involved (Case Study Subject 1).

In order to isolate the variables that caused this significant improvement in the treatment group's total attitude score, paired t tests were also done on the seven sub-scales of attitude. The results of these paired t

**Figure 5.8**

**Group Means for Total Attitude Scores in the Student Attitude Scale**



tests are displayed in Tables 5.1 and 5.2.

**TABLE 5.1 Results of the Treatment Group's Paired t tests for the Programme's Effects on the Seven Sub-Scales of Attitude.**

Sub-Scales of attitude	Pre-test means	Post-test means	Results of Paired t tests
Self-expression	10.69	11.57	t (25) = 1.67
Trust	10.23	10.23	t (25) = 0.00
Self-acceptance	11.15	11.73	t (25) = 0.86
Acceptance of others	10.61	11.84	t (25) = 2.47*
Self-awareness	10.61	11.30	t (25) = 1.27
Awareness of others	10.65	10.88	t (25) = 0.42
Empowerment	10.85	11.73	t (25) = 1.29

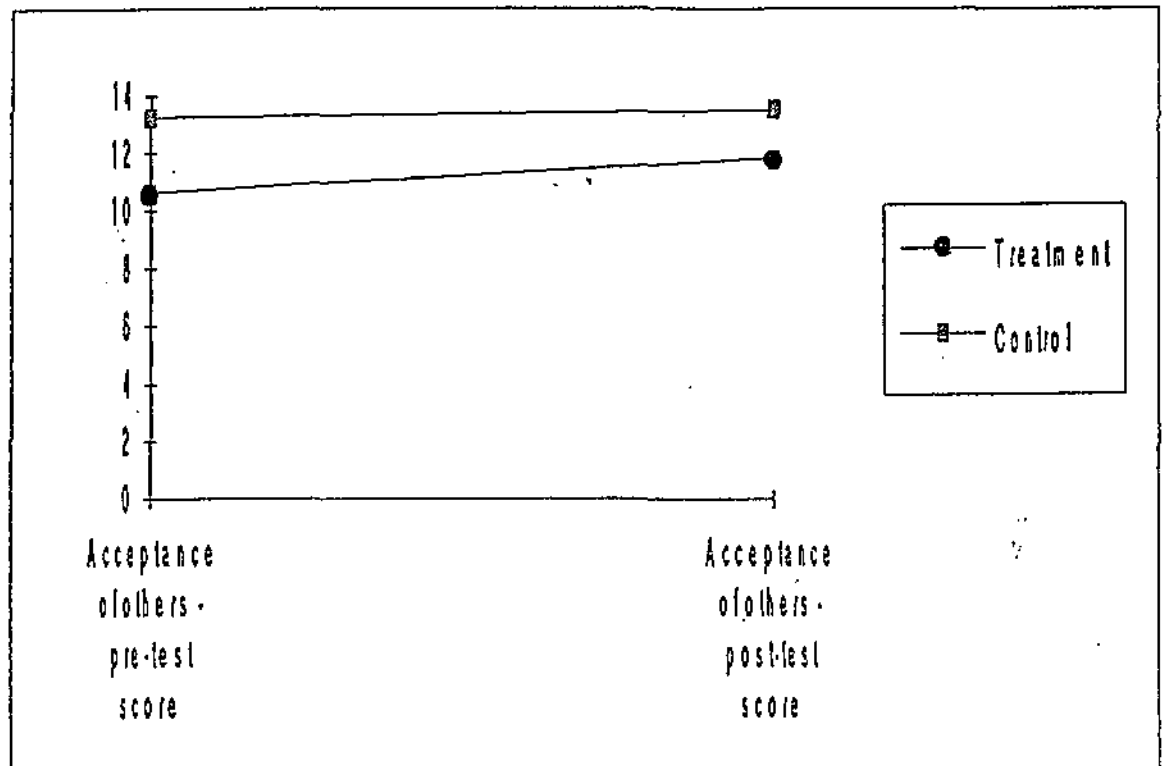
\*  $p < 0.05$

Table 5.1 shows that the mean scores for six of the seven dimensions of attitude increased between the pre- and post-test ('trust' remained the same). However, the treatment group's pre- and post-test means for 'acceptance of others' was the only dimension that indicated a *significant* difference,  $t(25) = 2.47, p < 0.05$ .

The group means for 'acceptance of others' are displayed in Figure 5.9. The graph and the treatment group's pre- and post-test group means clearly indicate that the difference in the group means for the treatment group is a positive one. Therefore, the major variable that

**Figure 5.9**

**Group Means for 'Acceptance of others' in the Student Attitude Scale**



contributed to the significant improvement in the treatment group's total attitude scores was 'acceptance of others'. In addition, the improvements demonstrated by the treatment group's means for the other dimensions of attitude (excluding 'trust'), although not significant, may have contributed to the significant improvement in total attitude.

**TABLE 5.2 Results of the Control Group's Paired t tests for the Programme's Effects on the Seven Sub-Scales of Attitude.**

Sub-Scales of attitude	Pre-test means	Post-test means	Results of Paired t tests
Self-expression	13.00	13.40	t (25) = 0.90
Trust	12.40	11.76	t (25) = 1.11
Self-acceptance	12.96	12.96	t (25) = 0.00
Acceptance of others	13.24	13.52	t (25) = 0.72
Self-awareness	13.24	10.76	t (25) = 4.60*
Awareness of others	11.44	11.56	t (25) = 0.20
Empowerment	12.92	12.60	t (25) = 0.54

\*  $p < 0.05$

Table 5.2 shows that the control group's pre- and post-test means for 'self-awareness' indicated a significant difference,  $t (25) = 4.60$ ,  $p < 0.05$ . It shows that the control group's pre-test mean is above its post-test mean, therefore, the control group's scores for 'self-awareness' *declined* significantly over the duration of the study.

In summary, these analyses addressed the second research question

outlined at the beginning of Section 5.2. The results of the Student Attitude Scale demonstrate that the programme of dramatic improvisational strategies did have an assessable positive effect on the treatment group's total attitude towards themselves and others. The paired t tests on the seven sub-scales of attitude indicated that the treatment group's 'acceptance of others' was the only dimension of attitude that showed significant improvement. Therefore, the improvement in the children's acceptance of each other was the major contributor to the significant improvement in the treatment group's total attitude scores.

### **5.3 DOES THE USE OF DRAMATIC IMPROVISATIONAL STRATEGIES CHANGE TEACHERS' RATINGS OF THE STUDENTS ATTITUDES AND ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE ?**

The effects of the drama programme on teachers' ratings of their classes' attitudes and academic performance were determined using the *teacher's rating scale* by Gourgey, Bosseau and Delgado (1985) (pre- and post-). The results of the teachers' ratings of their classes, made before and after the drama programme, are summarised in the table below.

**TABLE 5.3 Teachers' Ratings of their Classes Pre- and Post- the Dramatic Improvisational Programme.**

	Pre-Test Rating	Post-Test Rating
Treatment	64	95
Control	93	97

The table shows that the teachers' ratings increased over the course of the study. However, the treatment group increased by 31 points whilst the control group increased by only 4. Therefore, this table reveals that the teacher of the treatment group observed a greater improvement in her class's attitudes and academic achievement, than did the teacher of the control group.

Due to the large improvement in the treatment group's ratings and the small improvement in the control's, it may be thought that a ceiling effect influenced the results of the control group. However, the top score of the teacher's rating scale was 200, so there was plenty of room for the control group to improve. Therefore, it can be concluded that the small improvement in the control group's ratings was not due to a ceiling effect but to the minimal change in the classroom teacher's ratings of their class's attitudes and academic performance.

In summary, this analysis addressed the third research question outlined at the beginning of Section 5.3. The results of the Teacher Rating Scale demonstrate that the programme of dramatic improvisational strategies did change the classroom teacher's ratings of the treatment group and that this change was clearly a positive one. The observed improvement is illustrated in this comment made by the classroom teacher (the names that appear are fictitious, in order to maintain children's anonymity) :

Sarah and Kate hardly ever talk. It's not that they can't talk, they just don't. They also don't really join in with the other kids, they just work on their own. Then in the puppet plays when both of them carried off their group's play like they did, I was amazed. After



that they seemed to go from strength to strength. Towards the end of the term I even started to notice a difference in their willingness to join in on classroom tasks with other kids.

#### **5.4 SUMMARY.**

The results presented in this chapter demonstrate the effects of the dramatic improvisational programme on the subjects' oral comprehension skills and attitudes towards themselves and others. They clearly demonstrate that, for this group of Year 4/5 children, participating in the programme, their skills of translation, interpretation and extrapolation, were significantly enhanced as was their overall attitude towards others.

In the area of skill acquisition, the programme of improvisational dramatics improved all three oral comprehension skills to a significant degree. The drama programme's overall effect on the children's oral comprehension skills is highlighted by the classroom teacher when she said (the names that appear are fictitious, in order to maintain children's anonymity) :

Some of the drama sessions just absolutely stunned me. I was totally amazed at what some of the children came up with.... Susan, when she was in 'role', putting a string of sentences together without once stuttering. Peter as well, speaking clearly and purposefully, no stammering, or hesitating.

and Case Study Subject 1, when he said;

I feel I have to think more in drama. The answers aren't in the

back of the book and I have to think of them myself... but I think that makes it interesting.

The treatment group's improvements in attitude over the course of the programme were in no way uniform. Total attitude showed a significant improvement, although 'acceptance of others' was the only one from the seven variables that also indicated a significant difference. Overall there was a positive benefit from the drama programme on the children's attitudes towards themselves and others. There was however, some variation between the attributes. This improvement in their total attitude is reflected in some of the children's responses to the question; 'What did you enjoy and learn from doing drama ?

Well I had to co-operate with other kids and I'm not so embarrassed to talk in front of them (Case Study Subject 2).

I really liked being treated like an important person. I felt like people respected me (Case Study Subject 3).

In addition to the testing and the behavioural observation carried out during the study, the classroom teacher's ratings of the treatment group's attitude and academic achievement also indicated a significant improvement.

An extensive discussion of the above findings are set out in Chapter 6.

## CHAPTER SIX : DISCUSSION.

This study was concerned with exploring alternative methods of assisting children with low socio-economic backgrounds to access the benefits of mainstream education. The specific focus of the investigation was to examine the potential effects of dramatic improvisational strategies on the sample population's oral comprehension skills and their attitudes towards themselves and others. This study was conducted on children from two Year 4/5 classes in neighbouring primary schools. All children were classified as being of a low socio-economic status.

This study's primary focus was to measure the changes in three aspects of oral comprehension as a result of dramatic intervention. The first type of comprehension behaviour was *translation*, the second, *interpretation*, and the third behaviour, *extrapolation*. These three skills were selected because they represent different cognitive demands. The skill of translation is the lowest order cognitive process, whilst extrapolation is the highest. This difference in cognitive demands is explained by Bloom when he states:

Translation is often more akin to simple recall of knowledge.... (however) in order to interpret a communication, the individual must first be able to translate each of the major parts of it, go beyond this to comprehend the relationships between its various parts, and then re-order it in his mind....Accurate extrapolation requires that the individual be able to translate as well as interpret the communication, and in addition extend the

trends beyond the given data to determine implications, consequences and effects (Bloom, 1956, p.95).

By selecting comprehension skills that represented different cognitive demands it was possible for this investigation to ascertain what effect dramatic improvisational strategies had at different levels of cognitive processing.

The secondary concern of this study was to examine resultant changes in the children's attitudes towards themselves and others. Seven dimensions of attitude were selected for scrutiny; self-expression, trust, self-acceptance, acceptance of others, self-awareness, awareness of others and empowerment. This investigation's concern with attitude was based on the premise that an improvement in attitude has the potential to impact on the student's readiness to learn and therefore his/her subsequent achievement (Gourgey et al, 1985; Huntsman, 1982).

Analysis of the data showed significant improvements in the treatment group's skills of translation, interpretation and extrapolation. In addition, significant improvements were found in the treatment group's attitude towards others. The treatment group's classroom teacher also rated students' attitudes and academic performance more highly at the end of the programme.

## **6.1 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK TESTED IN THE STUDY.**

This study was based on the proposition that educational drama can affect children's potential to learn. The foundations for this proposition came from the philosophies of learning and language theorists (Bruner, 1986; Erikson, 1950; Halliday, 1978; Piaget, 1967; Romaine, 1984; Vygotsky, 1976) and the theories of drama educationalists (Bolton, 1986; Carroll 1985/88, Heathcote, 1980/83/85; Parsons et al, 1884; Slade, 1954; Way, 1967). The amalgamation of these theories formed a strong theoretical framework on which to base this study.

Drama provides a means for active participation and experience in education. Its inherent process allows children to work alongside their peers and teacher in an interactive environment, thereby fostering advanced learning behaviours and skills. The dramatic contexts stimulate a wide-range use of language and encourage children to move into more abstract modes of thinking. Hence, dramatic improvisational strategies can enhance children's language and mental development.

As previously discussed in Chapter 3, for this theoretical framework to be fully validated by the present study, the findings presented in Chapter 5 would need to have indicated the following :

1. The use of dramatic improvisational strategies significantly improved the sample population's oral comprehension skills.
2. The use of dramatic improvisational strategies had a significant effect on the oral comprehension skills that represented higher cognitive processes ( ie.interpretation and extrapolation ).

3. The use of dramatic improvisational strategies significantly improved the sample population's attitudes towards themselves and others.
4. The use of dramatic improvisational strategies contributed to a behavioural change (for attitude and school performance) in the sample population as seen by an outside observer.

## **6.2 THE DISCUSSION.**

### **6.2.1 ORAL COMPREHENSION SKILLS.**

The results of this study indicate that the skills of translation, interpretation and extrapolation can be enhanced by participation in an improvisational dramatics programme.

A major aspect of the programme which may have been responsible for its overall effectiveness was the fact that through the dramatic contexts children were immersed 'in' the stories instead of being passive onlookers. The concentrated practice of using the three skills of translation, interpretation and extrapolation within the drama contexts, to create and communicate their own stories, and to decipher and understand stories created by others, may have had a direct impact on the significant improvement of the treatment group's oral comprehension skills.

Responses from the children also suggests that the nature of the drama process fosters, in the student, an intrinsic motivation to learn. This is well illustrated in the comments made by two of the case study subjects.

I liked doing my reading and writing as a archeologist  
because I felt like I wanted to do a good job for the Egyptian

government, not because I had the teacher checking on me all the time (Case Study Subject 2).

Drama was a good way to learn new things. I really liked trying to figure out those scrolls. I found it really hard but I wanted to work it out. It would have been boring if we'd had to do that as a normal thing in class (Case Study Subject 1).

One can suggest, therefore, that greater motivation to learn may also have contributed to the significant improvement of the treatment group's oral comprehension skills (Erikson, 1950; Heathcote, 1988).

An interesting finding revealed in the results of this data was that not only did the dramatic improvisational programme significantly improve the skill of translation (which is a lower order cognitive skill), it also had significant effects on the higher order cognitive skills (interpretation and extrapolation) as shown in Figures 5.3 and 5.5.

Research on the language used in primary school classrooms (Carroll, 1988; Parsons et al, 1984) found that 61% of the teachers' talk and 70% of the children's talk related to 'matter', that is, "relating to the material world" (Carroll, 1988, p.16). Carroll interprets the results in terms of, "the strength of positivism as the theory of knowledge underlying school discourse" (1988, p.16). If then, mainstream classroom practice is heavily fact-orientated, and the skill of translation is primarily concerned with the recall of facts (Bloom, 1956), it is logical to assume that children's skill in translating would be well developed within the classroom context. In addition, the focus in drama is not on facts, rather, "it is a way of looking at the issues, relationships, implications, consequences and

responsibilities behind the facts" (Heathcote, 1980, p.13). It is possible, then, that both the treatment and control groups would have been already well developed in this skill area, and as the main focus of the drama process is not on facts, the improvement in translation may be due not so much to the inherent qualities of the drama process but, to the children's increased motivation. The dramas themselves encourage the children to persist and practise the skills in order to complete the task.

Of great interest is the fact that the improvisational dramatics programme had a significant effect on the skills of interpretation and extrapolation (as shown in Figures 5.3 & 5.5). These skills represent higher order cognitive processes (Bloom, 1956). This, therefore, suggests that drama strategies (as opposed to the classroom context) focus on, and develop, to a greater degree, the higher cognitive processes. The possible causes of these results may be due to the dramatic contexts employed, and the different language emphasis in the drama process.

Children with low socio-economic backgrounds often experience learning problems in traditional classroom contexts. The dramatic experience however, in order to bridge the gap between the known and the unknown, uses contexts (the dramatic situations) that are meaningful and relevant to the needs and interests of the students. Verriour states that, "children's difficulties with abstract learning tasks in unfamiliar contexts may find, in drama, the strategies to facilitate linguistic and cognitive growth" (1985, p.185). Therefore, although these children may have experienced difficulties with abstract cognitive



processes in normal classroom settings, in drama they found the support and motivation to tackle them. The following comment made by one of the participants relates to a difficult task of deciphering text. It illustrates her enjoyment and willingness to be involved in the learning process.

I really enjoyed making those discoveries because people needed my help. I like it in drama because we can go to different countries and be different people we would never get a chance to try out." (Case Study Subject 4).

Previous research (Carroll, 1988; Parsons et al, 1984) shows that traditional classroom contexts over-emphasize information-laden language, whereas drama fosters expressive language that moves children into more abstract modes of thinking. The imaginary contexts of drama continually require the child to confront the abstract problems of, "what might happen if ? (or) what does it matter to you, to me, to others ?" (Tupman, 1987, p.13). The reflective nature of the drama process also encourages the children to speculate, predict, hypothesize and generalize. The following extract occurred in a reflection time after lesson 10 and provides an example of the language and thinking that can take place.

- T I've often wondered if people have really changed at all over all these centuries ?
- P1 I think people are very different now, for sure.
- P2 Yeah, I think that in lots of ways people are different, computers and things, but in some ways things haven't changed much, You know, what happened to Ozymandias's people.

- T Well I wonder what it is that's the same ?
- P2 Well.....people taking things from other people that don't belong to them.
- P3 Like when the white people took over the Aborigines' land.
- P4 That's the same as what happened in the Gulf War.
- P5 World War II.
- P6 Like the Newcomers, all these wars are caused because people are still greedy perhaps ?
- P1 I'd agree that people are still greedy.
- P7 I think wars are about greed, for sure. People taking what they want and not caring about what other people need or want."

The very nature of the drama process encourages children to move into more abstract modes of thinking and, in so doing, fosters the development of higher level cognitive processes.

One can state then that the findings of this study, in terms of the empirical and anecdotal data on oral language, validate the claims that dramatic improvisational strategies enhances children's language and mental development.

### **6.2.2 ATTITUDE.**

The results of the data relating to attitude, suggest that the improvisational dramatics programme may also be valuable in improving students' attitudes towards others and, towards learning.

The study targeted seven areas of attitude. There was a significant improvement in the subjects' total attitude with the major variable that contributed to this difference being 'acceptance of others'. This suggests that the drama programme enabled the participants to become more accepting of others' ideas and feelings. The classroom teacher actually made a comment about the change of classroom dynamics within the dramas which provides a good explanation for this significant improvement in the groups acceptance of each other.

You get the dominant characters in the classroom and the other children hardly ever get to say anything. But, in the dramas, I found that in their 'roles', the classroom dynamics changed. The quieter children got a chance to speak and be heard which I felt meant a lot to them and also made the other kids see that their contributions were worthwhile.

Children who normally hardly ever contributed, found an opportunity within the dramas. This made them feel valued and allowed their ideas to be valued by the group.

This variable, 'acceptance of others' was however, the only one that demonstrated a significant improvement. The remaining six areas of attitude did not improve to a significant degree over the duration of the study. To expect children of this nature to have a complete turn around in attitude as a result of sixteen hours of drama is both naive and unrealistic. The inclining trend does suggest however, that over a greater period of time an improvisational dramatic programme may be able to significantly improve all aspects of attitude. It should be noted that a particularly unexpected decline in one attitude variable

(self awareness) resulted amongst the control group. Because the researcher was not present with the control group the reason for this decline is unknown. However, it does highlight the fact that these children in mainstream education are, if anything, at risk of deteriorating attitudes rather than the ideal of developing healthy self-concepts.

It may be that the improvisational dramatics programme, because of its emphasis on creative and interactive activities, has the potential to facilitate students' attitudinal skills. An improvement in attitude is particularly important for underachieving students because it encourages the development of a stronger sense of oneself as a capable person and of one's ideas as valuable.

In addition, the dramatic improvisational strategies markedly improved the classroom teacher's ratings of the class's attitudes and academic achievement. Some of the improvements she perceived are illustrated in her following comments:

In class, Case Study Subject 2 often baulked at a task set him in the classroom. He always had twenty questions, was very reluctant and slow to work through the task. His comments before have been 'This isn't very good', or 'I can't do this', very self-critical. This has most definitely lessened over the time. I've noticed that his willingness to take on classroom tasks has also improved....In class, Case Study Subject 3 often complains of being sick or having a sore tummy because she feels she can't do the work. In the dramas however, I think she felt she *could* do things and felt very positive about it. This I see very seldom.

This improvement in behaviour (in both attitude and school performance) as seen by an independent observer, strongly suggests that the behaviours and skills fostered within the drama frame are transferable to the other contexts and areas of the curriculum.

It can, therefore, be seen from the individual case study results, from the class results and from the teacher's ratings, that the findings of this study do indeed validate the theoretical framework.

### **6.3 LIMITATIONS OF INTERPRETATIONS PLACED UPON THE FINDINGS.**

The findings of this study are subject to several limitations. A significant threat to the study's internal validity is the lack of randomisation. For this reason it was impossible to control all extraneous variables or to create equivalent, representative groups. However, in an attempt to equate groups, subjects were selected from the same age group, neighbourhood and socio-economic level. In addition, a statistical method (Analysis of Covariance) of controlling difference between groups was also used on the data gathered from the Picture-Story Test. Due to the lack of randomisation however, the results from the analysis of covariance have to be interpreted with some caution.

It was also intended that the analysis of covariance be used on the data from the Student Attitude Scale. However, due to the fact that the two groups were so different at pre-test, it was decided that this form of statistical analysis was unsuitable. Because of their poor match there were some limitations of the control group for the variables relating to attitude. On the other hand, for the variables concerning

oral comprehension, the control group was particularly well matched. The limitations of the control group, therefore, only relate to the attitudinal variables that were examined in this study.

A further threat to the internal validity of the study was the personalised attention the four case study subjects received during the interviews (selected from the treatment group only). Although the case study subjects were only interviewed three times during the programme, it is possible that this may have had some effect on their post-test scores.

When considering the generalizability of the study's findings, there are two limitations that are particularly significant. It would be possible to suggest that the difference found between the post-test scores of the treatment and control group, may have been affected by two variables, other than the dramatic improvisational programme. The drama teacher (personal attributes, teaching style, bias) and the possible 'novelty effect' of the drama programme could have been factors that contributed to the positive result found in the post-test scores of the treatment group. These are important limitations and warrant further consideration.

#### **6.4 THE 'NOVELTY' EFFECT AND THE EFFECT OF THE DRAMA TEACHER VERSUS THE EFFECTS OF THE DRAMA PROGRAMME ON THE FINDINGS.**

Christie (1983) conducted a study to determine which factor - drama or adult contact - was primarily responsible for gains brought about by drama tutoring. The results of this study led Christie to suggest that the

gains in verbal intelligence made through drama tutoring were caused primarily by adult contact rather than the drama. These findings (which are discussed in detail in Chapter 2) highlight a major limitation of training studies.

On the grounds of the empirical findings of the present study it would be fair to propose that the improvements in the treatment group's oral comprehension skills and attitudes may be due to the drama teacher or the novelty of the drama programme, rather than the drama process. The statistical tests can only show if a group is significantly different at post-test on a specific variable. They can not indicate *what* caused the significant difference.

However, the findings of this study were not solely based on empirical evidence. Underpinning this study was a strong theoretical framework. Additionally, observational and descriptive data were collected to complement the empirical findings and provide a more holistic picture. From the theory and the descriptive data collected it is, therefore, possible to explain the way in which the drama programme produced the significant improvements in the children's oral comprehension and attitudes (this is discussed in detail in Section 6.2). There are, then, theoretical and observational reasons as well as empirical evidence for believing it was the drama process, and not the drama teacher or the novelty of the drama programme, that produced these significant improvements.

Establishing causality in field research is difficult , but, given that there are theoretical, anecdotal *and* empirical grounds, the conclusions drawn by this study are greatly strengthened. Every empirical finding can be explained theoretically and also backed up by anecdotes from both the classroom teacher and the subjects.



## **CHAPTER SEVEN : CONCLUSION.**

On the basis of the data presented in Chapter 5 and discussed in Chapter 6, it is concluded that the theory proposed in Chapters 2 and 3 provides an adequate explanation of the effects of dramatic improvisational strategies on the oral comprehension skills, and attitudes, of children with low socio-economic backgrounds. The results of this study can be satisfactorily explained in theoretical terms instead of random happenings. Therefore, it can be stated that dramatic improvisational strategies have the potential to improve the oral comprehension skills and attitudes of children with low socio-economic backgrounds.

The findings of this study, are as follows :

1. The use of dramatic improvisational strategies was found to improve significantly the sample population's oral comprehension skills.
2. The use of dramatic improvisational strategies was found to improve significantly the oral comprehension skills that represented higher cognitive processes ( ie. Interpretation and extrapolation ).
3. The use of dramatic improvisational strategies was effective in significantly improving the sample's attitudes towards others.
4. The use of dramatic improvisational strategies contributed to a behavioural change (for attitude and academic performance) in the sample, as seen by an outside observer (the classroom teacher).

## **7.1 IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY.**

It is clear from the findings of this study that dramatic improvisational strategies can create a learning environment which fosters positive attitudes and skills associated with making and communicating meaning.

The significant improvement in the sample's oral comprehension skills, especially those representing higher cognitive processes, illustrates the necessity for active participation and experiential learning in the education of children with low socio-economic backgrounds; learning how to make meaning and to communicate that meaning is *not* a passive activity. The drama contexts also clearly increased the children's motivation to learn, which, in so doing expanded the content of their learning. These children were learning life skills (eg hypothesising, speculating, predicting, theorising etc.) as well as expanding their knowledge bases; this is very different to the way these children perform in the mainstream where they struggle even to acquire facts.

The positive effects of the study were also evident in the children's attitudes. The development of these skills is not only important for school achievement as measured by testing instruments. It is also important for the development of the whole person, for improved relationships with others, for readiness to learn, and for ultimate success. It is vital that teachers find ways in which these skills and attitudes can be fostered within these children, beyond that produced by the regular mainstream school programme alone.

## **7.2 APPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY.**

Given the significant results that this study produced, it can be stated that the results validate the inclusion of educational drama into the school curriculum. Furthermore, not only does the study provide further justification and encouragement to teachers either using, or considering using, drama within their classrooms, it also provides another means for the facilitation of learning for children with low socio-economic backgrounds.

## **7.3 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH.**

This study suggests several directions for further research in this area. These include :

1. A longitudinal study designed to extend the present project and explore what effects an extensive programme of drama strategies has on the long-term development of children's oral comprehension skills and attitude. A study of this nature would be able to test out the suggestion that, over a greater period of time an improvisational dramatic programme may be able to improve significantly all aspects of these children's attitude.
2. Case notes made by the researcher during the study suggest that the Aboriginal children in the class responded very positively to the drama process. As this was not the focus of the study, no 'in depth' data was recorded specifically on Aboriginal children's performance. A very interesting study, therefore, would be to explore the effectiveness of a drama programme specifically on Aboriginal children's oral comprehension skills and attitudes. A large amount of observational

and anecdotal data would be of particular interest.

3. This study utilised the comprehension skills identified and defined by Benjamin Bloom (1956) and indices drawn from studies by Dansky (1980) and Saltz, Dixon & Johnson (1977). This model provided a very sound framework for this analysis of the transcribed data. However, it may be beneficial if further research in this area set about developing a more *recent* model for the analysis of these children's oral comprehension skills.

4. Because of the positive results found in this study further research in this area, of an ethnographic nature, may also be of use. An ethnographic study designed to explore *how* drama aids oral comprehension may provide valuable data. This could be done by recording and analysing all the oral language used by the children at the point within the dramas they are learning the targetted comprehension skills. The transcriptions could then form the basis for an in-depth analysis concerning the nature of the language used.

#### **7.4 CONCLUSION.**

Improving the achievement of socially and economically disadvantaged school children is a major task. Traditional remediation programmes are sometimes ineffective or simply insufficient. The improvisational dramatics strategies provide an effective approach for improving oral comprehension skills by tapping resources left untouched by conventional methods. In addition to this, the strategies provide an avenue for improving attitudes which may be related to achievement and to many other aspects of school success. These

points are clearly illustrated in the following comment made by the classroom teacher. She was expressing what she had found most successful about the programme.

I think the kids in the dramas really felt that they *could* do the tasks, although their attitude in the classroom is often a defeatist one. The thing I probably enjoyed the most, was watching kids who usually seem so disinterested and cope so poorly in the classroom, really come alive and shine, so to speak.

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## **APPENDIX 1 - TRANSCENDENCE INDEX,**

"These categories represent deviations from pure observation, independent of what is shown on the pictures. They can be applied without reference to the actual pictures, because they denote factors which would represent transcendence of observation in any pictorial material." (Weisskopf, 1950, p382)

The following categories are :

1. INTRACEPTION : refers to the ascribing of emotions, desires, thoughts, fantasies, etc., to the figures in the picture.
2. TEMPORAL TRANSCENDENCE : refers to the inclusion of events which occur prior to, or after the event shown in the picture.
3. SPATIAL TRANSCENDENCE : refers to the inclusion of persons, objects, events, etc., which are outside the field of view represented by the picture.
4. RELATIONSHIP : refers to the characterization of figures as related to other figures in the same picture eg. kinship, friend.
5. CONTENT OF SPEECH : refers to verbal statements made by pictorial figures.
6. EVALUATION : refers to the characterization of figures or objects by a subjective value statement eg. aesthetic; pretty, ugly, neat, or, moral evaluations.
7. ATMOSPHERE : refers to the characterization of the whole picture or part of the picture in terms of an emotional response which it elicits in the observer eg. "This picture is calm and peaceful."
8. IMPERATIVE : refers to comments to the effect that a pictorial figure

"should", "must", "is supposed to", act, feel, think in a certain manner.

9. SYMBOLISM : refers to the conscious and explicitly verbalized ascribing of symbolic meaning to the picture eg. "This is climbing the ladder to success."

10. EMPHASIS : refers to the singling out or stressing of a part of the picture eg. "The most important thing in this picture....."

(Weisskopf, 1950, p282/83)

## **APPENDIX 2 - INDICES FOR ORAL COMPREHENSION SKILLS.**

### **1. DISCUSSION QUESTIONS.**

- 1.1 Why did you choose this picture?
- 1.2 What can you see in the picture?
- 1.3 What do you think this picture is about?

### **2. INDICES.**

#### 2.1 TRANSLATION.

- Number of elements in the picture that are mentioned in the story  
(Dansky, 1980)

#### 2.2 INTERPRETATION.

Rate of 'Storyness' on a five point scale;

- 0. Bizarre story not related to the picture.
- 1. Objective/ factual description of the picture.
- 2. Minimal story related to the picture, with no elaboration.
- 3. A story with relevant elaboration
- 4. A well constructed story with extensive elaboration.

(Dansky 1980, Saltz, Dixon & Johnson 1977)

#### 2.3 EXTRAPOLATION.

- Number of comments that go beyond pure description of the picture.
- Scoring will be based on Weisskopf (1950) "Transcendence Index" ( see Figure 2 )

### **APPENDIX 3 - BEHAVIOURAL ASSESSMENT INSTRUMENT : PROCEDURES**

#### Directions:

1. Complete the identification information at the top of the observation checklist.
2. Start observations at the onset of the lesson and observe the two target students continually, for the entire course of the lesson. You must be aware of the fact that your attention should be directed equally to both target students. Record all behaviour that is illustrative of any of the four target behaviours and record it on the respective child's checklist, under the correct item, in the form of a tally.
3. At the bottom of the checklist is a space for you to include any anecdotal comments you may feel are useful. For example, if you feel that your observation of one student meant that you missed something significant about the other student, you could note this down.

#### Definitions of Behaviour:

For all the target behaviours the following contexts are deemed to be acceptable for the exhibition of the required behaviours.

The behaviours may be exhibited by

- the target individual alone,
- the partnership in which the target individual is participating,
- the small group in which the target individual is participating.

The behaviour may be exhibited in the form of

- discussion, or

- performance; role-play, improvisations, puppetry.

Listed below are the four target behaviours. To enhance their meaning each behaviour is illustrated by an example and a non-example. All examples are based on a pictorial stimulus taken from Roberto Innocenti's book, 'Rose Blanche'. This book will be made available to the observers.

**1. The ability to translate information from a non-verbal form to a verbal form (translation).**

Note: translating visual information into a verbal form, and/or  
translating written information into a verbal form.

\* the subject retells, aloud, the presented information within the lesson time. The 'retell' is only defined as adequate if all four conceptual areas are included:

1. *emotion*
2. *action*
3. *the character(s), and*
4. *the situation.*

EXAMPLE: A sad young girl is looking out of the window of an  
building. She is watching the soldiers go by.

NON-EXAMPLE: A girl is looking out the window.

**2. The ability to grasp the concept of 'the work' as a whole (interpretation).**

\* The subject expresses, in a verbal form, the underlying meaning of the presented information. It must be *relevant*, *concise*, and must be consistent *with* and *represent the focus of the stimulus*. Although



characters need not be included, the essence of the stimulus (whether emotional, active or contextual) must also be reflected.

EXAMPLE: This picture is about the sadness of war.

NON-EXAMPLE: This picture is about soldiers.

**3. The ability to infer details about a character, context, or action (extrapolation).**

\* The subject presents, in a verbal form, *relevant* information that is *in the context* of the presented information, and that *includes information/details not given*.

Note: The subject is not required to say much in order to fulfil this requirement.

EXAMPLE: The little girl's family has been killed in the war.

NON-EXAMPLE: The girl has one brother and two sisters.

**4. The ability to predict a continuation of trends (extrapolation).**

\* The subject expresses, in a verbal form, information that is *relevant* to the presented information, that *extends logically* (forwards) from the information, and with *content that is invented* by the subject in response to the stimulus information. The basic requirement is that the prediction should be more than a single event.

EXAMPLE: Today the little girl is going to leave her village. Everything has been destroyed in the war and she has nothing left. She takes one last look at the street below, remembering how beautiful it used to look before the soldiers came.

NON-EXAMPLE: Today the little girl is going to leave her village.

**APPENDIX 4 - BEHAVIOURAL ASSESSMENT INSTRUMENT :**  
**OBSERVATION CHECKLIST.**

Child's name:

Date:

Observer:

Time:

1. The ability to translate information from a non-verbal form to a verbal form (translation).

2. The ability to grasp the concept of 'the work' as a whole (interpretation).

3. The ability to infer details about a character, context, or action (extrapolation).

4. The ability to predict a continuation of trends (extrapolation).

Comments:

Total for behaviour 1:\_\_\_\_\_

Total for behaviour 3:\_\_\_\_\_

Total for behaviour 2:\_\_\_\_\_

Total for behaviour 4:\_\_\_\_\_

Sum total:\_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX 5 - STUDENT ATTITUDE SCALE

### ITEMS ON THE STUDENT ATTITUDE SCALE

1. I never know what to say when the teacher calls on me.
2. I never have any good ideas.
3. Sometimes I think of really great things to do.
4. Sometimes I can make people laugh.
5. I like to make up stories.
6. Most things other kids tell you are lies.
7. I like to make new friends.
8. I don't like anyone knowing how I feel.
9. I would never let anyone see me cry.
10. If I ever got angry at my friends they would not like me anymore.
11. It is okay to make mistakes.
12. I am afraid to talk out loud sometimes because people might laugh at me.
13. I would rather be me than any other person.
14. I don't think that many people like me.
15. If people knew what I was really like they would not like me.
16. I don't think a person is dumb just because they make a mistake.
17. I only like people who I think like me.
18. I think there is some good in everybody.
19. When a kid is different from me, I don't like them so much.
20. When someone makes a mistake, I laugh.
21. I can usually tell when I am getting sick before I really get sick.
22. I don't always know what I am feeling.
23. Most of the time, I don't know why I do the things I do.
24. If I feel bad, I usually know what is bothering me.
25. When I get angry, I know what I am angry about.
26. I can tell the difference when somebody is really upset and when they just say they are.
27. I usually can't tell when someone is lying to me.
28. I can tell when people tell me things they don't believe themselves.
29. I usually can't tell when the teacher is happy with me and when the teacher is mad with me.
30. I can tell when the kids in my class feel bad.
31. Nothing I say or do changes anybody's mind.
32. If I study, I can get a good grade.
33. My friends do not listen to my ideas.
34. I can do many things well.
35. When I talk, kids listen to me.

Reference : Gourgey, Bosseau & Delgado, 1985, p11

**APPENDIX 5 (cont.)**

<b>ITEMS AND POSSIBLE SCORE RANGES FOR THE STUDENT ATTITUDE SCALES</b>		
<b>SUBSCALE</b>	<b>ITEMS</b>	<b>POSSIBLE SCORE RANGE</b>
Total attitude	1 - 35	35 - 105
Self-expression	1 - 5	5 - 15
Trust	6 - 10	5 - 15
Self-acceptance	11 - 15	5 - 15
Acceptance of others	16 - 20	5 - 15
Self-awareness	21 - 25	5 - 15
Awareness of others	26 - 30	5 - 15
Empowerment	31 - 35	5 - 15

**APPENDIX 6 : STUDENT ATTITUDE SCALE ANSWER SHEET**

1.	AGREE	NOT SURE	DISAGREE
2.	AGREE	NOT SURE	DISAGREE
3.	AGREE	NOT SURE	DISAGREE
4.	AGREE	NOT SURE	DISAGREE
5.	AGREE	NOT SURE	DISAGREE
6.	AGREE	NOT SURE	DISAGREE
7.	AGREE	NOT SURE	DISAGREE
8.	AGREE	NOT SURE	DISAGREE
9.	AGREE	NOT SURE	DISAGREE
10.	AGREE	NOT SURE	DISAGREE
11.	AGREE	NOT SURE	DISAGREE
12.	AGREE	NOT SURE	DISAGREE
13.	AGREE	NOT SURE	DISAGREE
14.	AGREE	NOT SURE	DISAGREE
15.	AGREE	NOT SURE	DISAGREE
16.	AGREE	NOT SURE	DISAGREE
17.	AGREE	NOT SURE	DISAGREE

18.	AGREE	NOT SURE	DISAGREE
19.	AGREE	NOT SURE	DISAGREE
20.	AGREE	NOT SURE	DISAGREE
21.	AGREE	NOT SURE	DISAGREE
22.	AGREE	NOT SURE	DISAGREE
23.	AGREE	NOT SURE	DISAGREE
24.	AGREE	NOT SURE	DISAGREE
25.	AGREE	NOT SURE	DISAGREE
26.	AGREE	NOT SURE	DISAGREE
27.	AGREE	NOT SURE	DISAGREE
28.	AGREE	NOT SURE	DISAGREE
29.	AGREE	NOT SURE	DISAGREE
30.	AGREE	NOT SURE	DISAGREE
31.	AGREE	NOT SURE	DISAGREE
32.	AGREE	NOT SURE	DISAGREE
33.	AGREE	NOT SURE	DISAGREE
34.	AGREE	NOT SURE	DISAGREE
35.	AGREE	NOT SURE	DISAGREE

## APPENDIX 7 - TEACHER RATING SCALE

### ITEMS ON THE TEACHER RATING SCALE

1. Level of participation in class.
2. Level of writing scale.
3. Level of creative imagination.
4. Level of communication with peers.
5. Level of motivation.
6. Level of initiative.
7. Curiosity of subject matter.
8. Exhibit self-assuredness.
9. Exhibit positive self-image.
10. Exhibit poise.
11. Self-critical.
12. Exhibit pridefulness.
13. Exhibit need for approval.
14. Inappropriate drive to enter into and complete work assigned.
15. Critical of others.
16. An appreciation of subject matter.
17. Respect for peers.
18. Ability to build friendships.
19. Ability to take turns.
20. Problem solving skills.
21. Verbal skills.
22. Level of self-control.
23. Engage in independent work.
24. Comprehend subject matter.
25. Retention of subject matter.
26. Demonstrate inability to meet the demands of the teacher.
27. Willingness to tackle new tasks.
28. Ability to take direction.
29. Eagerness to participate.
30. Trusting attitude.
31. Interact freely with peers.
32. Exhibit appropriate behaviour in class.
33. Exhibit positive attitude towards self.
34. Exhibit positive attitude towards others.
35. Exhibit positive attitude towards school.
36. Ability to handle change.
37. Willingness to handle change.
38. Sensitivity towards peers.
39. Willingness to take direction from peers.
40. Ability to share.

Reference : Gourgey, Bosseau & Delgado, 1985, p12

## APPENDIX 8 : TEACHER RATING SCALE

1. Level of participation in class.
2. Level of writing skill.
3. Level of creative imagination.
4. Level of communication with peers.
5. Level of motivation.
6. Level of initiative.
7. Curiosity of subject matter.
8. Exhibit self-assuredness.
9. Exhibit positive self-image.
10. Exhibit poise.
11. Self-critical.
12. Exhibit pridefulness.
13. Exhibit need for approval.
14. Inappropriate drive to enter into and complete work assigned.
15. Critical of others.
16. An appreciation of subject matter.
17. Respect for peers.
18. Ability to build friendships.
19. Ability to take turns.

LOW	2	3	4	HIGH



	LOW	2	3	4	HIGH
20. Problem solving skills.					
21. Verbal skills.					
22. Level of self-control.					
23. Engage in independent work.					
24. Comprehend subject matter.					
25. Retention of subject matter.					
26. Demonstrate inability to meet the demands of the teacher.					
27. Willingness to tackle new tasks.					
28. Ability to take direction.					
29. Eagerness to participate.					
30. Trusting attitude.					
31. Interact freely with peers.					
32. Exhibit appropriate behaviour in class.					
33. Exhibit positive attitude towards self.					
34. Exhibit positive attitude towards others.					
35. Exhibit positive attitude towards school.					
36. Ability to handle change.					
37. Willingness to handle change.					
38. Sensitivity towards peers.					
39. Willingness to take direction from peers.					
40. Ability to share.					

## **APPENDIX 9 - DRAMATIC IMPROVISATIONAL PROGRAMME : THE LESSON PLANS.**

The following programme of lessons is the result of the researcher's original written programme, detailed case notes made at the end of each lesson (recording modifications and alterations made), and audio-taped records of each lesson's reflection time. From the data, this detailed account of the sixteen drama lessons was compiled. It is intended that this record be used to permit replication of this study.

**Theme : Story-building & Telling.**

**Task : Building a class story.**

Lesson One. **BUILDING A STORY.** *(An introductory lesson in order to meet the children and spend time establishing a rapport with them)*

- Sitting in a big circle the teacher shows the class an object which is going to be the stimulus for the story building (In this case it was an old Tibetan conch shell). While playing some mood music the teacher passes the shell around the circle asking the children to examine it very carefully, feel it, listen to it, smell it.....
- When everyone has had a look the teacher passes it around the circle again and asks the first five to six children to say one thing they notice about it, the next, to suggest who might have owned it (It is important to explain to the children that anything that is suggested will be accepted, as long as it fits in).
- The teacher/class chooses one of the suggested owners of the object and the the next five to six children begin describing this character.

- The next child is asked where the owner lived - five to six children add descriptive phrases about the place.
- This format continues with the following questions being asked; What were some of the things this person did in a normal day ? Why was this shell so important, so special to this person ?
- **Tension Point : One day the owner of this object had to suddenly go on a very long journey.....**
- The original format resumes as the children try and unravel the mystery; Why did he have to go on this journey ? Where did he have to go to ? How did he travel ? Who did he meet on the way ?.....How does our story end ?
- **Whole class reflection time :** Time for children to reflect on the story they have created; Some time spent as a group together on the floor re-telling the story that was built, then; I wonder what part/s of the story you really liked the best ? Supposing our character came to live in our time, what might happen then ? If I had a conch shell like he did I just can't imagine what I would do with it ?.....

**Theme: Puppetry. Task: Producing an improvised puppet play based on the book 'Dinner with Fox' by Stephen Wyllie, but with an original ending.**

**Lesson Two. CREATING THE ENDING.**

- The teacher reads the story omitting the last three pages(the end).
- Overall Task; In self chosen groups make up a puppet play based on this story but with your own ending.
- Discussion of the story; Where does the story take place ? Who are the main characters ? What are they like ? What happens (discuss concept

of beginning, middle and end) ? What could happen in the end ?

Could we introduce another character ?, Who ?.....

- Group Work; children divided into groups of five. Task; Discuss and decide upon your own original ending for 'Dinner with Fox'. Decide who will play the role of the four characters in the story and what your fifth character will be.

- **Whole class reflection time** : Opportunity to seek information from the children and encourage ownership of their 'creation'; How are you going to go about making up your puppet plays ? What sort of things will you need to think about ? What things do you think will be difficult ? How are you going to overcome them ?.....

### Lesson Three. CHARACTERIZATION.

- 'Who are we ?' To develop children's sense of playing a 'role';

- \* Children break into groups based on the character they are playing (ie) All Red Fox's all together..... Each group provided with big sheet of butchers paper and some pens.

- \* Task; In your group discuss, brainstorm and come up with some ideas for the following questions;

1. What would your character's voice be like ?

2. How would your character move ?

3. How would your character act ?

4. Brainstorm some words that would describe your character ?

- Class discussion; Groups share with the class what they discussed.

- Puppet Making. ( The following materials were provided; brown paper bags, crepe paper, cotton wool, plastic eyes, card, wool)

- **Whole class reflection time** : Opportunity for children to share their creations and to encourage the children to reflect on their characters.

Lesson Four. PLAYINGS.

- Re-reading of the story to refresh children's memories.
- In groups children play out their plays (Teacher circulates and provides help where it is needed).
- Playings; Children show their plays to the rest of the class ( this showing did not have a 'performance' emphasis to it , rather it was a **sharing** between individuals who had all been through the same process).
- **Whole class reflection time** : Opportunity to encourage children to reflect and evaluate the experience; Do you think that staying in role is important ? What did you feel about the plays ? Are you sure that your plays have everything they need ?.....

Lesson Five. RE-PLAYINGS. (Due to the children's enthusiasm we decided to have a re-playing of their plays).

- Class discussion; Go over plays and talk about the things that can improve them (eg) always face puppet to the front, all characters have turns at speaking, loud and interesting voices, showing the full body of the puppet,.....
- Time for children to discuss in groups last minute details.
- Re-playings.
- **Whole class reflection time** : Opportunity to draw together project; What do you feel is important about story beginnings ? I wonder what it is that makes a story interesting ? I wonder if endings are really that important to a story ?.....

**Theme : The Morality of Conquest .**

**Task : Deciphering segmented text.**

**Lesson Six. THE DISCOVERY.**

"Good Morning Ladies and Gentlemen. May I thank you on behalf of the Egyptian Government for responding to our call for help. Because you are all so highly respected in the field of archeology we are in need of your advice and guidance. After two days of digging at the site we found this inscription on a stone tablet. We have called you here to counsel us on its meaning and if we should undertake the task of opening up the whole site" (Teacher-in-role: Public voice).

- Read Inscription. "My name is Ozymandias, king of kings;

Look on my city ye people and shed a tear !"

Nothing here remains, all is in decay.

The hand and heart that friendship gave,

was then deceived and shattered.

All that is left is the desert sands,

lonely and level they stretch far away.

(Adapted from Percy Bysshe Shelly's poem, cited Heathcote, 1980, p8)

- Class Forum: Discussion as to the meaning of the inscription and whether the dig should be opened.

- Discovering an old drum wrapped in precious fabric. Opening the drum together and finding nine ancient scrolls inside.

- The whole class carries out the first reading of the ancient scrolls.

**THE NINE ANCIENT SCROLLS.** ( Adapted from , Heathcote, 1980)

1. During the 20th year of the reign of our great king Ozymandias, three strange ships coming from far away lands appeared. We had never seen people like this before.

The visitors were received and they presented great gifts to our Great One. We offered thanks in the temples. Later, we traded with them and we found out that they were very skilled tradesmen. Many were.....

2. When the hurricane passed, many of boats were lost and many of our men were killed. The strangers from across the sea whose boats were stronger than ours, helped us to redesign our ships and even rebuild .....

3. On this occasion our leader bade us to rejoice in the building of the dam to hold back the Great Lake. The dam will keep us safe and give us water in the dry season. We gave our hand in friendship to the Newcomers for helping us in this big project. This further cements our bond of friendship. What a mighty blessing the Newcomers have been. They will.....

4. At sunrise Rytakall - daughter of the high priest, arrived under the great holy red rocks. The Newcomers who had safely guarded her on this long journey could now go no further. She alone climbed the long path to the Golden Temple. This was a place only the holy people of our land could go and.....

5. Today is a happy day in our land. Our Princess begins the long journey across the sea. It has been decided that she will marry the son of the Newcomers' king. We hope the marriage will bring peace and riches to our land. Some of our new friends have been trusted with the job of taking her, our prayers and blessings go with them as they.....

6. At the burial of the Soothsayer, the high priest noticed that certain things were different from the traditional ceremonies. The coffin lid was in position **before** sunset, and the tomb had been built in a different way. It was explained that the expert craftsman from across the seas had wanted to work according to their own traditional ways. It was regarded as polite to allow this but the high priest was very.....

7. It was decided by the Newcomers that they would settle by the sea and they needed new timber to repair their old ships. They planned that timber from the Sacred Grove should be chopped down. Four trees were taken before and stripped

before anyone realised. In spite of protest from our people and our King, more timber was taken. Much argument began.....

8. All our young men have to attend all day every day. I can no longer go fishing with my father or study with my teacher. When I complained, my father warned me, "Son, keep your words to yourself because times are changing." The changing times not only effect our work days but also our private lives. Nothing is the same anymore.....

9. Alas we have no choice, even our holiest temples are no longer ours. Who can tell in what way these changes began ? Who can tell how they will ever end ?.....

- **Out-of -role Reflection:** Seeking information on how it was for the children in the drama and reflection on what has happened ; How did it feel being archeologists ? What do you feel about the teacher-role ? As we watched the ancient drum being opened I wonder what each one of you were thinking ? I wonder what these scrolls are about ? .....

NOTE - This session is very important for setting the tone for the whole drama. The class stays as a whole in order to get the feel of the impending task that is about to unravel. The teacher should continually endeavour to upgrade language and model a professional attitude for children to reflect.

- A reference library was set up in the classroom for the children to carry out off-duty research (eg) a selection of books on Egypt, tombs, civilization.

Lesson Seven. THE DECIPHERING. (Between sessions the scrolls can be mounted in nine different locations around the room)

- Teacher-in-role begins the drama.

- Class forum: Re-reading of scrolls and brief discussion on them.



- Class divided into nine self chosen groups and given the task of discussing their scrolls and deciphering their cryptic meanings.
- Each group is then asked to give the rest of the archeologists a lecture on the possible meaning of their scroll - the images, culture, tradition, civilization, places.....
- Class forum: The nine public lectures. The blackboard is used by the teacher-in-role to make public recognition of the archeological skills (The main points recorded by the teacher were made into an official chart to act as a framework for future work).
- **Out-of-role Reflection:** Encouraging children to objectively reflect on the drama (the subjective experience); How did your group come to decisions about your scroll ? What do you think ships looked like in those times ? What do you feel these scrolls are saying ? I wonder what sort of leader Ozymandias was ? Who do you think could of written the scrolls ?  
.....

#### Lesson Eight. A GROUP PICTURE.

- Drama opened by teacher-in-role and archeologists recap on their findings. Archeologists given the task of building a group picture of the event they are investigating.
- Class forum: Discussion of the event. Children must arrive at a consensus; talk and agree upon the images (to arrive at these images children must re-read the tablets, look for clues, use imagination or consult reference books).
- Self-chosen work parties select different images and areas and paint the images on to large paper ; these will be regarded as important documentation.

- Group task- Organise a second lecture on the event, but this time 'as if' they had been present at the time of the occurrence (Archeologists talk to each other, look at their depiction in paint and crayon).
- Class forum; "What was it like to live at the time of Ozymandias".
- **Out-of-role Reflection:** Opportunity to evaluate the experience and consolidate learning; What do you think the Newcomers/Egyptians were like ? What would be good about living at that time/what would you find difficult ? I wonder why the Golden Temple was such a special place ?

Lesson Nine. THE APPEARANCE. (Paintings are mounted on the walls with inscriptions written by the archeologists, underneath.)

( A parent/teacher/relief dressed as King Ozymandias, is sitting on a chair, motionless, as children come in. At his feet are a selection of different percussion instruments.)

- Teacher-in-role explains that this statue has been found at the dig and ancient Egyptian myth states that when the day came that the statue was found by modern man, Ozymandias would return to life for one audience.

- Children back in their nine original work groups (one at each scroll).

Task- What questions would you ask the statue of Ozymandias if it was to come to life ?

- Group forum; Archeologists discuss how to awaken Ozymandias.

- Performance of the 'Awakening Ritual'.

- One by one archeologists stand before King Ozymandias and ask their questions.

- **Out-of-role Reflection:** Opportunity to probe the symbolic meaning of the encounter; Why do you think the Newcomers treated the Egyptians as they did ? I wonder what makes people try and control other people ? I wonder if this still happens today ? If people get hurt in this process I wonder why we still do it ?

Lesson Ten. **STORY-TELLING.**

(Everything displayed around the classroom; books, objects, scrolls, drum, Ozymandias' robes.....)

- " Ladies and Gentlemen our time draws to a close and we are in your debt...Today is your last meeting and we would like you to help us to, name the nine scrolls, and put together the final pieces of the puzzle."

(Teacher-in-role)

- Group forum; As a group decide on the important features of each of the nine scrolls and a suitable title to symbolise them (eg) The Time of Arrival..., The Time of Friendship....., The fall of Ozymandias.....(The nine titles are put on card and mounted next to each scroll)

- Archeologists move into small self chosen groups. Task; Construct in your own language your interpretation of the story hidden in the nine scrolls.

-Final forum; Each group presents their story to the group.

- The teacher tape records their stories in order to  
'preserve this great knowledge'.

- **Out-of-role Reflection:** Opportunity to seek 'universal' human meanings; I've often wondered if man has really changed at all over the centuries ? .....

**Theme : Storybuilding.**

**Task : Putting together segmented text.**

Lesson Eleven. 'PROFESSOR BLUNDER'.

(To lead into the next theme, the story 'Wilfred Gordon McDonald Partridge' by Mem Fox was chosen because it deals with memories and getting old.)

- Teacher explains to children that today they are going into a different pretend world, they are going to meet someone with a very big problem (Teacher leaves the room and comes back dressed as an old professor. The professor comes into the room tripping, stumbling and dropping papers as he goes).

- " Oh people of Earth I'm in the most terrible muddle. I was on my way to deliver six copies of the Wise Lord's favourite book to his six beautiful wise children when a great wind blew them out of my hands and muddled all the pages up..... What am I going to do ?"

(Professor has six photocopied sets of the book 'Wilfred Gordon McDonald Partridge', by Mem Fox, all muddled up)

- 'People of Earth' break up into six self chosen groups and work on sorting out the books for the Professor.

- Group forum; Children come together and show the Professor what they have done, how they did it, why they made the choices that they did. Professor Takes the books back, thanks them and leaves.

- Class debriefing.

- Reading of the story.

- Discuss the story and story conventions ; Beginning, middle and end, descriptive language, plotting out the action, discussing characters.....

- **Whole class reflection time** : Opportunity to reflect on the story; I wonder what this story is saying ? I've often wondered what it would

be like to be an elderly person ? Can you imagine what you would like to do with your life ? How would you like to be remembered ?.....

**Theme: Self-Awareness. Task: To work through the process of building a symbol to represent a personal ideal and to use hypothesizing skills to explore other's personal symbols.**

Lesson Twelve. **BUILDING STATUES.**

Reflection back on last lesson; If you could do anything with your life that you wanted what would it be ? When you got old I wonder how you would like people to remember you ?.....

- Class discussion; Teacher and children brainstorm together.....

- \* Famous statues, can we think of any ?

- \* Statues represent what important/significant things a person has done in their life. If you could choose **now** , what you would like to be remembered for ? and, how would you represent this in a statue ?

- Task; With the piece of clay given to you build a statue of how you would like people to remember you.

- Building of the clay model: (Teacher circulates to conference with the children and extend their ideas).

- **Whole class reflection time** : Opportunity for children to share with the class what they have made; I wonder what qualities you think this statue stands for ? .....

Lesson Thirteen. **DISCOVERING THE STATUES.**

- Drama; 25 statues of important people have been found and they are estimated to be 1000 years old. Children are a group of historians in the year 2092. The teacher is the liaison officer for the Chairmen of the Historical Association.

-Task; Form a partnership with a colleague and choose a statue that you feel would be most suitable to go outside the newly constructed Houses of Parliament. The statue must be researched and you must present your findings at a group forum. There can only be one statue chosen.

- Research guide-lines;

1. Description of the statue ?
2. What does it tell us about the person it represents ?
3. What qualities do you think this statue stands for ?

-Format; \* Greeting and explanation of discovery/their task.

\* Partner work ( teacher circulates out-of-role).

\* Group forum; Hear from each partnership about the statue they chose and why that should be the one to be displayed.

Discussion to decide which one should finally be chosen; I wonder what sort of statue it is that we want to be displayed for all to see ? I've often wondered what sort of qualities we want to support as a community ?.....

- **Out-of-role Reflection:** Chance to explore our human value systems; What qualities I wonder, did you see as most important for the statues to represent ? Did anyone feel that some qualities should not be represented ? Why these qualities ? .....

**Theme; Storybuilding & Telling. Task: To construct a persons life story from seven artifacts.**

#### Lesson Fourteen. THE SELECTION (Building Belief).

- Sitting in a group the teacher explains that the drama is going to be about some people living in the future. Explain that the children are all

highly respected members of the Galactic Federation and the Federation Commander has just called an urgent meeting.

- (Teacher-in-role as the Federation Secretary) "Good Afternoon ladies and gentlemen. You are all here at this secret meeting, because you are all leading experts in your own field. I have some news to give you, which I must ask you to keep secret, The government has found something of great significance and has ordered the Federation Commander to form a work party of experienced and skilled people to start work on this secret assignment. When you leave this meeting, ladies and gentlemen, you must go away and decide whether you want to be considered for this assignment, and you must have strong reasons for wanting to take on this task".

- Out-of-role discussion; What sort of people would be chosen ?  
Occupation ? Character ?.....

- Small groups/partners; Children decide on their names, occupation and individual reasons for wanting to apply for this work party.

- In-role group forum; Teacher-in-role forms an interview panel, choosing two members of the federation to assist her. Interview all those wishing to go; Who are you sir ? How will you be useful for this assignment ? What is your work experience/specialities ? What are your reasons for wanting to join us ?

- (Teacher-in-role) "You will be notified tomorrow as to the committees choice.

- **Out-of-role Reflection;** Opportunity to speculate what will happen next in the drama and get feedback as to what they would find interesting; I wonder what the assignment is ? I wonder what the Galactic Commander is like ?.....

Lesson Fifteen. THE ASSIGNMENT.

- (Teacher-in-role) " Congratulations for all being selected. There were 150 applicants, therefore you represent the cream of the Galactic Federation. Now the time has come to present you with the secret assignment. Two galaxies away a patrol ship had to make a landing on what used to be the planet Earth. While there the patrol man found an old body box inside a tomb. He returned with it and since then it has been constant laser protection. The Federation Commander gave me this letter to read to you all as it explains your secret assignment.

- The letter;

Dear fellow Galacticans.

Your task is to examine the seven artifacts which came from the earth persons body box and use them to construct a case study of this persons life. I want as much detail as you can discover.

Your findings are vital to the continued growth of our master computers memory banks. You have 12 hours to complete your task.

- Uncovering of the seven artifacts (An old drum, beaded embroidered blanket, pair of old spectacles, large silver ring, a small painted box, an old children's rattle, a lock of gold hair)

- Out-of-role group discussion; What, I wonder does the Commander mean by a case study ? What information is he going to want ? What materials will you need to do this task ?.....

- In-role work parties; children make self chosen groups and work on the assignment (secretary/teacher walks around offering any help, conference with groups)

- "Time is up".



- **Out-of-role Reflection;** Opportunity for children to discuss what they put together and for them to talk about what they found straight forward/difficult.

Lesson Sixteen. **THE PRESENTATION.**

- (Teacher-in-role) "Ladies and gentlemen the Commander will be arriving in ten minutes to hear your findings. You have that time to organise your presentations".
- The Commander (parent/teacher/relief) enters, greets the work party and the presentations begin.
- The Commander thanks the work party and leaves. The rest of the meeting in the hands of the secretary.
- Ceremony; In order to thank the members of the work party for their hard efforts, a presentation is made to each individual by the secretary, in the form of a formal ceremony (This ceremony had a dual purpose; to thank the federation work party, and also to farewell the children as this was the last session)
- **Out-of-role Reflection;** De-briefing of the drama programme.

## **APPENDIX 10 - FORM OF DISCLOSURE AND INFORMED CONSENT.**

"The effect of drama strategies on the oral comprehension skills of Yr. 4/5  
Primary School children in the District."

### **Dear parent or guardian:**

The purpose of this study is to find out what advantages there are in using drama strategies to develop children's language skills. The study will involve the children being tape-recorded as they tell a story and also while they are interviewed.

This study will be carried out over one school term (term 3) for a period of eight weeks. The information gained will be of great value to teachers who want to help their students improve their language skills. Involvement in the study is entirely voluntary.

Any questions that parents or guardians may have can be directed to Heather Timms on [REDACTED]

### **For parents or guardians:**

I have read the information above and any questions I have, have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree to allow my son/daughter/ward to participate in this activity, realising they may withdraw at any time.

I agree that the research data gathered for this study may be published provided the name of the school, or the name of my son/daughter/ward is not used.

**Signature of parent or guardian :** .....

**Date :** .....

**For Children :**

I understand that I will be involved in a study at school and that Miss Timms will tape-record me while I tell a story and while I talk to her. I know this will happen at the beginning of term and also at the end and that I can ask any questions I want to.

**Name:** ..... **Date:** .....

**Researcher:** ..... **Date:** .....